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May 1990

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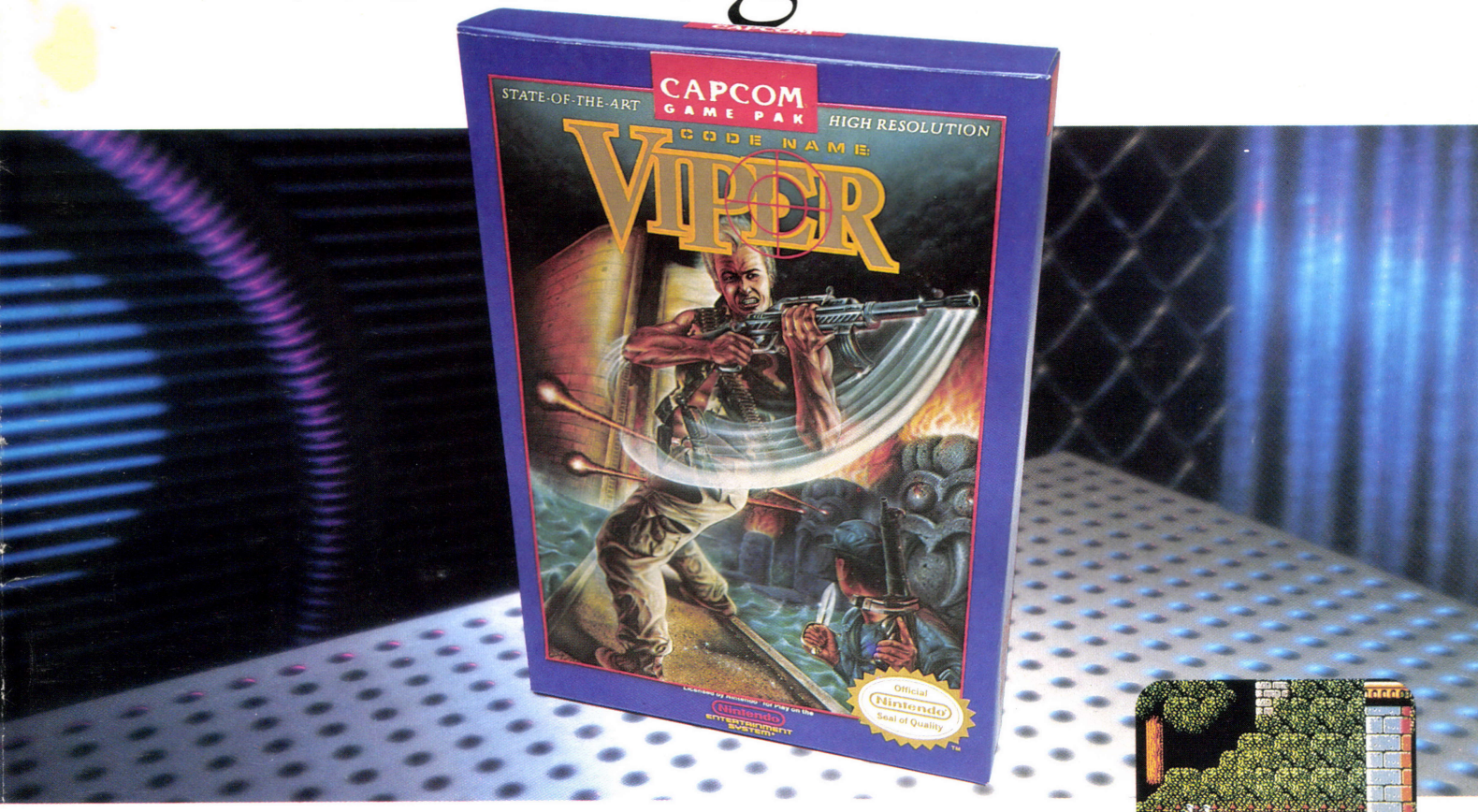
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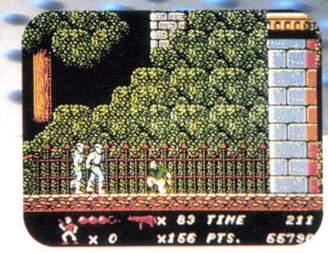
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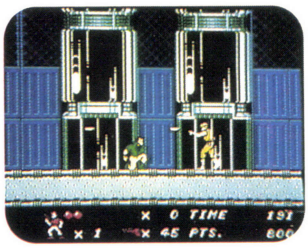
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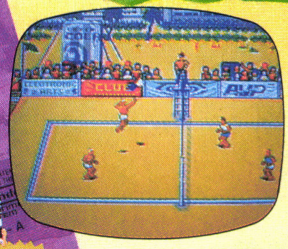
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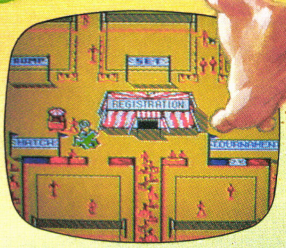
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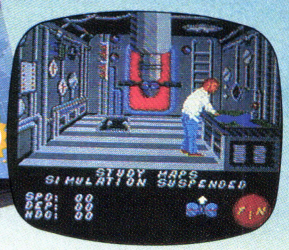
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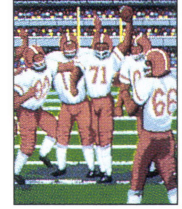
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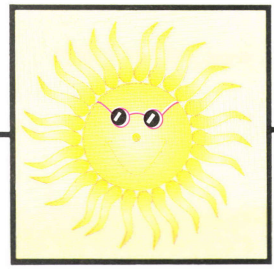
CIRCLE #103 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

Cover: A lunar battleground like the one you'd find in NEC's *Military Madness*, is the setting for this month's cover. Turn to page 46 for maps and tips on this exciting Turbo-Grafx-16 war game.

Art: Alan Hunter

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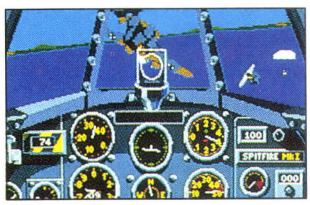
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Executive Editor
ANDY EDDY

Art Director
MAXINE NAYLOR

Assistant Art Director
CATHY DUNN

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National Advertising Manager
JEFFREY EISENBERG
JE PUBLISHER'S REPRESENTATIVES
Address all inquiries to:
6855 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 302
Los Angeles, CA 90038
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Advertising Production Director
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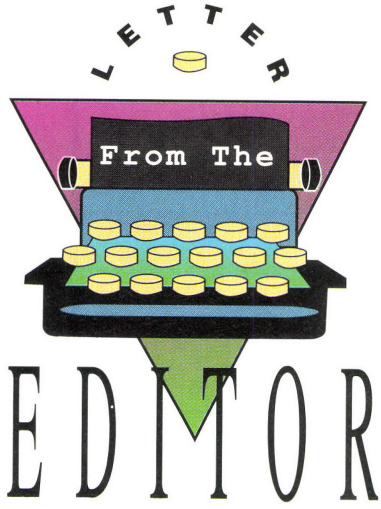
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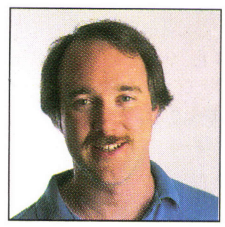
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ABC Membership Applied For.



It seems as if many of the VG&CE readers are quite into our monthly *Destination Arcadia* column. Since we added that feature, with coverage of the September '89 AMOA (Amusement and Music Operators Association) show in our January 1990 issue, the response has been amazing. It's been so overwhelming, in fact, that we are going to cover more coin-ops each issue.

This change will begin in the July VG&CE. Next month we'll bring you more in-depth coverage of the arcade industry by featuring the other "big" coin-op show, the ACME (American Coin Machine Expo), which was held in early March in Chicago.



Frankly, we're excited about the coin-op industry and what it has to offer arcade-goers. With machines that push technology, like the high-powered graphics of Atari's *Hard Drivin'* and *S.T.U.N. Runner*, and the innovation of Sega games like *Line of Fire* and *Galaxy Force*—not to mention the evolution of computerized pinball, there is so much to be had for a quarter.

Oh, did I say a quarter? Gee, I meant 50¢.

Wait, did I say 50¢? I meant a *dollar*. Yes, you heard right—the arcade industry is currently pressuring on our representatives in Washington, D.C., to pass legislation for the introduction of a dollar coin.

Actually, "introduction" is the wrong word here considering the Susan B. Anthony dollar coin was tried out years ago. It never really took hold, though, because it's shape and size was nearly identical to that of a quarter.

Furthermore, what's the logic behind the dollar coin? Well, it makes it easier to set an arcade game up for more expensive play. Instead of the normal 25¢—or these days, more likely 50¢—arcade owners are hoping to be able to charge $1 per game. Yes, one *dollar* per game.

If you couldn't tell, I have a problem with this concept. While I understand the devaluation of the dollar affects how much money is made by an operator and that many of these games cost more to produce, going from 25¢ to $1 is a *big* jump, especially when you consider that most arcadiacs are young and don't have tons of money to toss out casually.

What would be smarter is for the arcade industry to plan out a strategy to strengthen their position. Right now, most coin-op insiders are griping about the effect of home video games on their business, but our surveys show that approximately 87% of our readers go to arcades *and* have home systems.

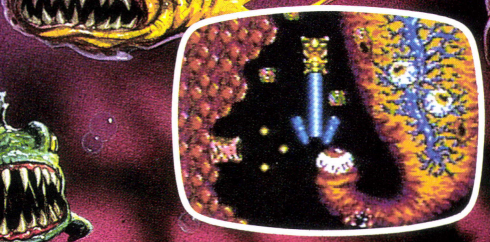
If the two factions work together to release titles to home market after a run at the arcade, there's no reason that *everyone*—including the player—can't come out a winner.

—Andy Eddy, Executive Editor

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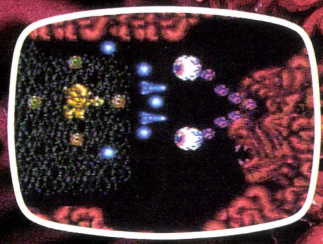
DO YOU HAVE THE STOMACH TO BATTLE IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST?



UGLY EYEBALLS



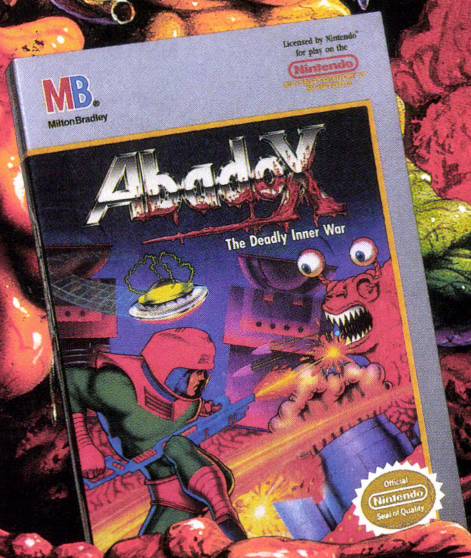
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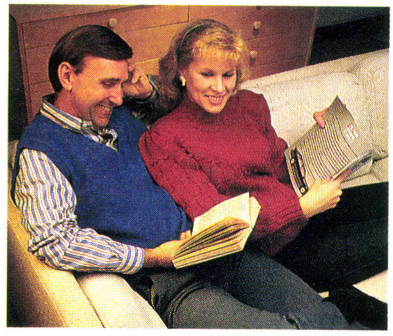


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Just put on the stereo earphones. And get ready. Sound shifts rapidly from ear to ear, while video images race across the screen. It's fun and intense – almost real – as the excitement swirls around you.

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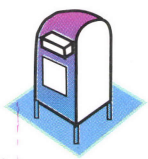
TO BE (DIS)CONTINUED

Dear VG&CE:

On the 18th of December, I went to Toys 'R' Us in Bakersfield to see how much *Kid Icarus* cost, and they said it was discontinued. Is it really discontinued or just discontinued in that store?

—Scott McDonald
Shafter, California

Unfortunately, Scott, usually only the freshest cartridges appear on the shelves of toy stores. While there are some older games that are still being sold, many, like Kid Icarus, *have been discontinued. If you really want to pick up an older game, you can either wait for a possible rerelease (which is rare, but does happen) or try contacting a used-cartridge dealer like Play It Again! or Video Replay. Take a look at the* Advertiser Index *(see page 116), and give these companies a call to see if it's in stock.*



NEAR PERFECT

Dear VG&CE:

I first picked up your magazine at the local magazine stand, and I must say that I really liked it. I have now subscribed and am totally pleased with the mag. The thing I like best about your magazine is the 2- or 3-page reviews and the info on the latest updates in the gaming world.

What I like least about your magazine is that you don't have a section that lets a person write in and ask how to get past a hard area in a video game. If this was included inside VG&CE, it would make the mag perfect.

I have both a Sega and an Amiga and will also be getting a Genesis (I decided to buy one the minute I saw your August issue). Your magazine is the best for game-system and computer-game info as far as I'm concerned.

—Mark Hutchinson
Lively, Ontario, Canada

Well, you asked for it, Mark. Starting in the June issue, VG&CE *will begin a column for assistance in getting through tough spots. If you have trouble in a video or computer game, send your problem to* VG&CE, *9171 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 300, Beverly Hills, CA 90210, and we'll try to get an answer to you. Due to the volume of mail we expect, we won't be able to provide personal replies.*

WHO'S THE GREATEST?

Dear VG&CE:

Do you have a top score list? If you don't have one, please start one because my friends and I feel that it really adds to the fun of the magazine and the challenge of the game. It's like competing with the whole country.

Thank you for your time.

—Brian DoBucki
San Clemente, California

In all honesty, Brian, we've received a lot of requests for a table of high scorers, but always turned down the idea for a number of reasons:

- *While many of the best players read* VG&CE, *there are a bunch who don't and , therefore, wouldn't be in the running for a high-score title.*
- *The number of pages it would require to list high scores are better served with more reviews, news and other articles on electronic gaming.*
- *Not all players are equipped with a camera that would allow them to take a picture of the screen to record their high score. Obviously we wouldn't be able to do this column on an honor system, and players would have to provide us with proof of their accomplishments.*

Finally, there are a series of contests starting up (see News Bits, *page 16) that should help players find out how they compare to other players. The Nintendo World Championships and the Tournament of Power will run local qualifying events culminating in a national champion. (Nintendo's contest will only cover NES games, while the Tournament of Power is planning on offering competition on NES, Sega, Atari, TurboGrafx-16 and arcade machines.) Keep looking in* VG&CE *and your local newspaper for more information on when these contests will be taking place near you.*

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY ADVERTISING

Dear VG&CE:

I love your magazine, but I have one complaint. When I page through your magazine, most of the ads are for [NES products]. Lots of people own Segas and Ataris. I own an SMS, and the only SMS ad I've seen is for *Galaxy Force*. It's as if Nintendo is the ultimate system.

I don't think this is fair to the people who own Segas and Ataris. I say you should advertise equally between all video-game systems.

—Bryan Stradley
Holland, Michigan

Many readers have written in with similar requests, Bryan, but we need to explain how magazine advertising works so you'll understand that we don't control what appears on the advertising pages:

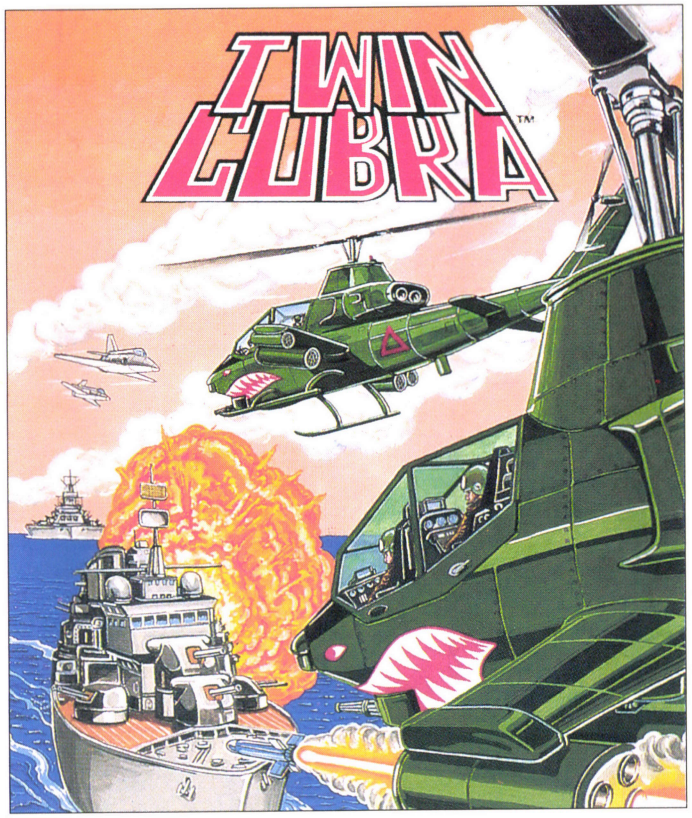
When a company wants to get some information to video- or computer-game players, it contacts our advertising representatives and commits to buying space in the magazine. Once it comes time to put the magazine together, the ads are received at our advertising department. At this time, we decide if there are any problems—such as an ad not fitting on our pages or an obvious (and correctable) mistake in the ad's text. If there aren't, as is

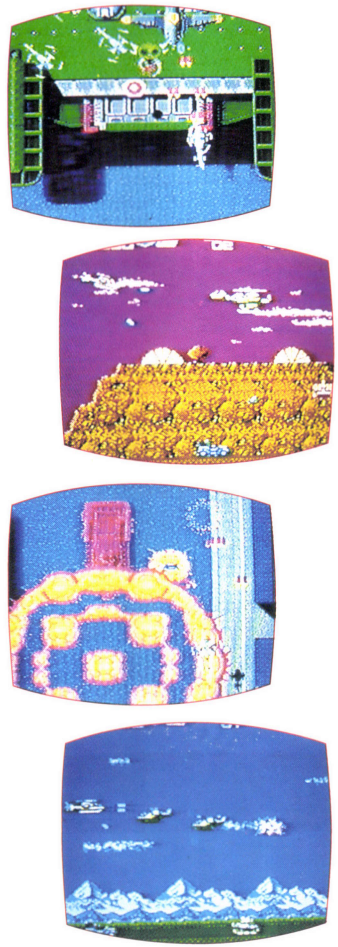
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CIRCLE #106 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

usually the case, we "paste up" the ad and ship it for inclusion in VG&CE.

As you can see, we don't dictate what ads appear on our pages. As you noted, there are lots of owners of older Sega and Atari video games, but few software-developing companies support those systems. For that reason, it's less likely that you'll see ads for those systems in VG&CE.

Also, particularly with our magazine, readers use the ads to see what is going to be appearing on store shelves soon. If there is a company that you'd like to see advertise in VG&CE, *drop them a note.*

A BIG NAY

Dear VG&CE:

While enjoying the Sega Genesis cartridge *Thunder Force II*, I happened to stumble upon a curious fact. The end boss of the game is named Reficul. This doesn't appear to be so thrilling, but read or write the letters backward and the boss is now called Lucifer.

This isn't the only game in which otherwise evil religious deities are placed into games that should be void of such evil connotations, and it's not a coincidence that can be easily brushed away. Take the TurboGrafx-16 cartridge *Dungeon Explorer*. One of the boss creatures in the game is named Natas. Spell it backwards and it becomes Satan.

My intention with this letter isn't to degrade either of the 16-bit systems, but only to reveal an important fact. I support both systems because I find them entertaining and fun. Continue to allow these names into the cartridges and my support will diminish. Those in charge of naming the characters need to be more creative—and less sacrilegious. Rewriting evil deities backwards cannot be an acceptable marketable resource to draw upon in creating these advanced games.

—Ralph Labozzo III
Stamford, Connecticut

Thanks for your letter, Ralph. It brings up a good point.

Video games have always been a struggle of good versus evil, and the "bad guys" have often been provided with descriptive names. While some of us don't consider the titles Reficul or Natas to be harmful, companies have to be careful when they name characters in this manner because they risk offending their potential customers.

The best action to take is to write a letter directly to the company in question, explaining that you don't agree with the naming of its characters. Few manufacturers will take a chance with a possibly offensive product if it will affect sales.

A QUESTION OF SURVIVAL

Dear VG&CE:

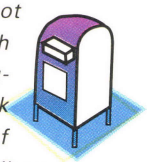
I would like to start off by saying that I have searched high and low for a good game magazine, and I've finally found one. Keep up the good work.

Now my question: I have been playing video games since I owned an Odyssey 2, and I watched video games rise and fall in the big shake up of 1983, but I stuck with them. During that time it seemed that there were too many systems out at one time (including computers), and people were divided so much that everyone got hurt.

Now, once again, with the release of the Genesis, TurboGrafx-16 and more to come in 1990, it seems like the game industry is going to do the same thing to themselves. Do you see that happening again? Also, has the Genesis established itself, because I don't want to buy something that isn't going to be around.

—Scott Baker
Westmont, Illinois

Good question, Scott. We feel that one of the downfalls of the first generation of video games was the limitation of the technology. People got tired of the same game appearing under a different name and the lack of identifiable characters. Certainly that isn't much of a problem for the newer machines that can animate not only character movements, such as walking, jumping or swinging a sword, but also the look on a face or subtle shading of the character's clothing. When video games were new, most anything that appeared caught players' attention, which made some companies a bit lazy. Innovative thought wasn't that important to many insiders.



There are indeed a number of game machines to choose from, but we don't see that as a negative; instead it gives the player a choice. And while there may be a slowing down of the industry, I doubt that it will result in the drastic crash that occurred seven years ago.

A STICKY QUESTION

Dear VG&CE:

I really enjoy reading your magazine, but I often find myself searching all over the city and not finding your magazine in book stores. I keep telling myself to get a subscription, but I don't like the labels they put on the cover because it ruins it.

I wanted to know if there is a way to get back issues and how much they cost. Thank you for your time.

—Nasario Martinez III
Oakland, California

Thanks for your letter, Nasario. Truthfully, subscribing is the best way to go because it costs less, comes right to your door and also shows up about a week before it hits the newsstands. And don't worry about a label marring your cover: Subscribers receive their copy in an envelope.

Finally, back issues are available in limited supply. Simply send $4.00 for each issue to VG&CE, *P.O. Box 16927, North Hollywood, CA 91615.*

DOWN FOR THE COUNT

Dear VG&CE :

I'm wondering how many Nintendo games there are. I counted 218; my brother thinks there are only 97. Please answer.

—Nick Bild
Fruitport, Michigan

Counting the number of NES cartridges at any time is an almost impossible task. The reason is that Nintendo limits the number of games out because it believes that too many games will ruin the market. This means that many games, as we noted before, become less popular and are discontinued.

Our information shows that about 250 third-party NES cartridges (both new and old) are planned for 1990 in addition to the 30 or so that Nintendo plans to bring out itself. Keep in mind that this list contains lots of games that aren't out yet, and not all of them will be released this year. Finally, not all cartridges will be carried by each store. In many cases, you'll have to do some shopping to find a particular title.

GET THE TITLE THAT JUST MIGHT DRIVE YOU CRAZY!



Fester's Quest™ takes the skeletons out of the closet for a trip to outer space.

If "space games" are your thing, here's the spaciest one yet! With Lurch, Pugsley, Thing, and the rest of the Addams crew at his side, Uncle Fester leads the way in the wildest, wackiest alien shoot-'em-up ever! The action is manic, the graphics explosive, and the story is guaranteed to leave you howling. So find out for yourself how much fun going crazy can be. Get "Fester's Quest." At your favorite dealer now!

SUNSOFT® ***THE TITLEHOLDER!***

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Hot News for Hot Shots!

Get the inside track on Sunsoft games in the **FREE** Sunsoft Game Time News.

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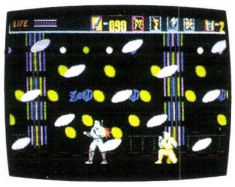
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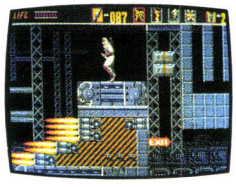
Mail to: Sunsoft, P.O. Box 2390, Libertyville, IL. 60198 VGC

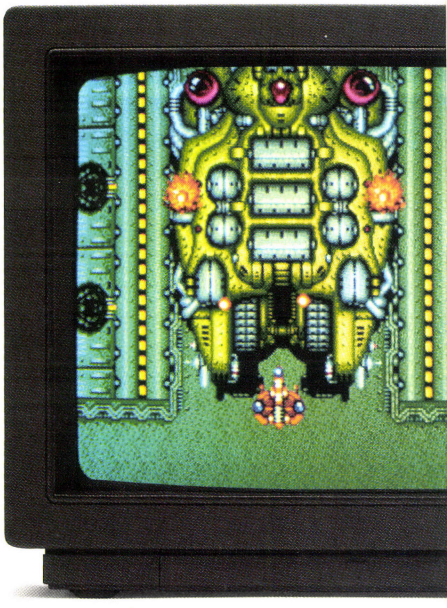
WE BRING THE ARCAD









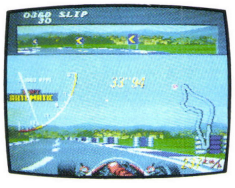


REVENGE OF SHINOBI.™ With your samurai sword and the help of the shuriken, you face the dreaded Neo Zeed. Fighting your way through high-rise elevators, across factory conveyor belts, and atop a speeding Bullet Train, you avenge the death of your ninja teacher.

TRUXTON.® The Gidans have ambushed your Super Freighter in deep space and now control its cargo of secret weapons. They plan to











SUPER MONACO GP.™ Burn through the tight turns of a European racing circuit in your open-wheel Grand Prix car, shifting through 7 gears as you take your tach to redline and watch the buildings of the cityscape rush at you at 200 mph.

SUPER HANG-ON.™ Pick a top factory team mechanic to customize your superbike and take on world-class opponents like Hans

Altered Beast,™ the Sega® arcade hit, comes with the Genesis system. Other games sold separately. Sega and Genesis are registered trademarks of Sega of America, Inc. Truxton is a copyright of Toaplan Co., Ltd. All other game titles are trademarks of Sega of America, Inc. © 1989 Sega of America, Inc. P.O. Box 2167, South San Francisco, CA 94080

CIRCLE #107 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

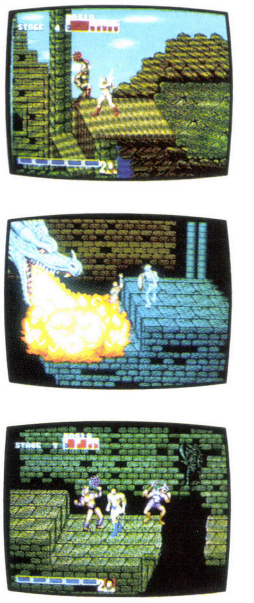
E EXPERIENCE HOME.





destroy your planet Borego. You must stop them with your Rainbow Circle shot as you navigate the fortified asteroid belt.





GOLDEN AXE.™ You fight through the forest and Turtle Village facing fire breathing dragons and fearsome knights, across the Bridge of Fear and on the back of a turtle, past the eye of the eagle to Death Adders castle where you rescue the princess.





"The Iron Man" Braun or Mia "Rocket Girl" Ferraru as you race across the terrains of Africa, Asia, America and Europe.

Only Sega® brings you today's hottest blockbuster arcade hits. As well as real arcade classics like Space Harrier II, Super Thunder Blade and Altered Beast.

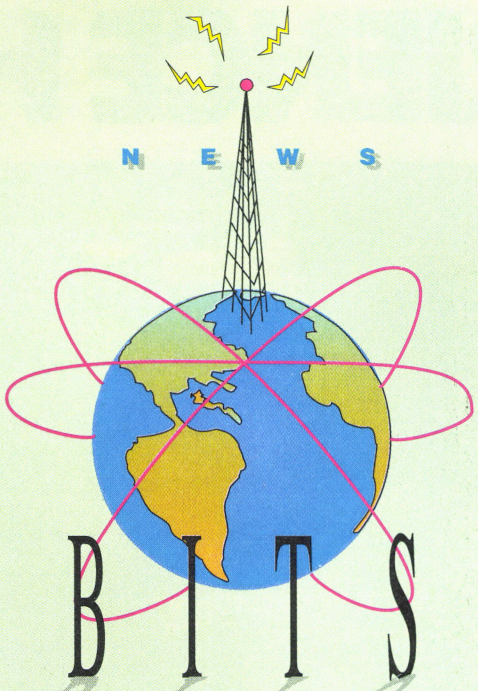
On Genesis,® you get to play two new levels of Golden Axe that aren't even in the arcade version. And Revenge of Shinobi even goes beyond the arcade hit in this new exciting sequel. Truxton and Super Hang-On bring you the same action and gameplay you've come to count on in the arcade hits. And Super Monaco GP continues to deliver on the arcade promise in months to come.



But, that's what you'd expect from Sega. The masters of arcade entertainment.

SEGA®
GENESIS®

We Bring The Arcade Experience Home.



Chess Champ Mates Machine

The Deep Thought chess-playing computer pushed Soviet grand master Garry Kasparov to the wall in a match held at Harvard's Memorial Hall, but he pulled out a victory against his electronic challenger. The world's top-ranked player had just 90 seconds left on his clock, compared to 12 minutes on Deep Thought's timer, when he decisively broke through the machine's defenses to claim the victory.

Deep Thought, based in Pennsylvania, has a memory bank of 800,000 moves. The 26-year-old Kasparov forced it into an error and put the attack-minded computer on the defensive. Deep Thought resigned rather than make its 37th move.

Kasparov prepared for the match by analyzing Deep Thought's previous matches, including its drubbing of grand masters Bent Larsen and Robert Byrne. "I'll be able to beat any computer for the next five years," he said prior to the start of play. "The computer mind is too straight," he explained, adding that it lacks the intuition and creativity needed to beat the top human chess players.

Kasparov's victory was a little more crushing than Deep Thought team leader Feng-hsiung Hsu had hoped, but the 64-square war between man and computer is not over yet. A successor to Deep Thought, funded by IBM, is under development and should be ready for a rematch within about three years.

Nintendo to Crown Champion

Are you one video-game ace in a million? Nintendo is giving the nation's players a chance to press their claim to the title. The Nintendo World Championships (NWC), which runs through October, will travel to 30 cities in search of the ultimate power player in each of three age categories: 11 and younger; 12-17; and 18 and older. The video-game competition climaxes with the world finals, planned for Orlando, Florida, later in the fall.

The company has developed a special "triathlon" game cartridge specifically for use in this coast-to-coast tournament. Although there are three games incorporated into this electronic obstacle course, Nintendo has combined them in a unique way that is said to test participants at all skill levels.

The competition cartridge contains elements from three Nintendo hits: *Super Mario Bros.*, *Rad Racer* and *Tetris*. Contestants must collect 50 coins in *Super Mario Bros.*, pile up a preset mileage figure in the race and then fit the pieces together in Alexey Pajitnov's *Tetris*.

The NWC features a wide range of exhibits and hands-on demonstrations for those who aren't quite up to the ultimate challenge. The show gives fans a chance to try current and future releases for the NES and Gameboy. The "Power Walk" boasts more than 130 NES and over 200 Game Boy play stations.

Another highlight of the entertainment portion is the Nintendo magic show presented from a big stage. The company's game counselors will temporarily leave their phone consoles and offer answers to players' questions at each stop on the tour.

EMCI/Rockbill, an entertainment marketing company, created the tour; Jay Coleman and Steven Grossman are executive producers. The official sponsors of the tour are Pepsi, Jell-O Frozen Snacks, Nintendo Real Fruit Snacks, Oreo Chocolate Sandwich Cookies, Chips Ahoy! Real Chocolate Chip Cookies and Reebok. Panasonic is the official video-equipment supplier. Tickets for the show or the competition are available from Ticketmaster and Ticketron. The entry fee for the championship is $3. General admission is $9.50 for those under 18 and $12.50 for adults.

Mario Meets the Funnies

Mario and other top Nintendo video-game characters are set to star in a series of comic books to be published by the newly formed Voyager Communications, Inc., of New York City. Under the leadership of former Marvel Editor-in-Chief Jim Shooter, VCI plans to issue three Nintendo-themed comics: a 32-page monthly for $1.95, a 96-page bimonthly for $9.95 and a special $1.95 book that will be sold through comic book-specialty stores.

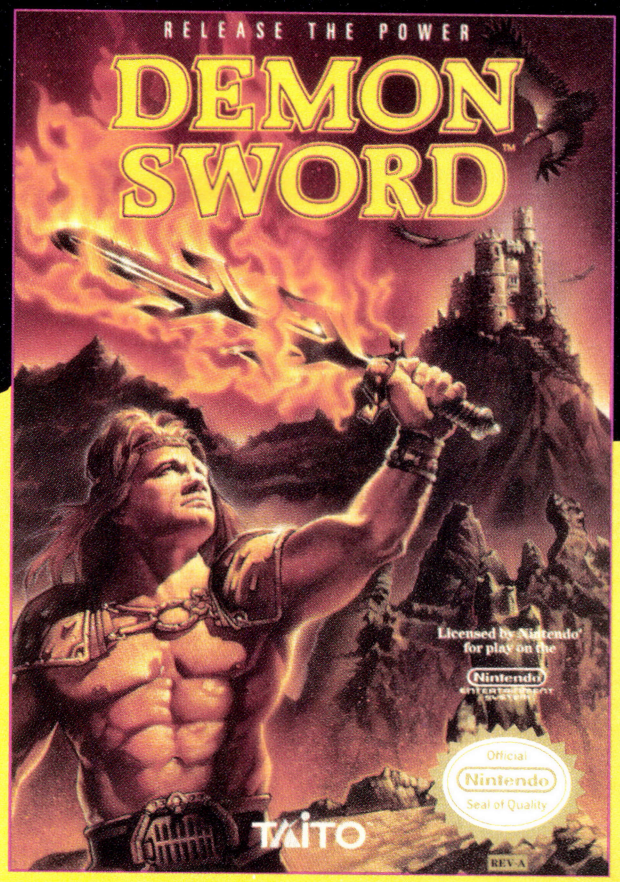
The full-color comics will be a little bigger than the current comics industry standard, more like the comic books of the '40s in size. The premiere issues should be available later this month.

Distribution of these titles is as unusual as their format. Nintendo representatives will channel them to retailers, so the comic books are expected to be available in most stores that sell Nintendo hardware, accessories and cartridges.

One-in-Four Homes Have Computers

New statistics released by the Electronic Industry

MASTER THE POWER



IN A LAND OF IMPOSSIBLE EVILS . . .

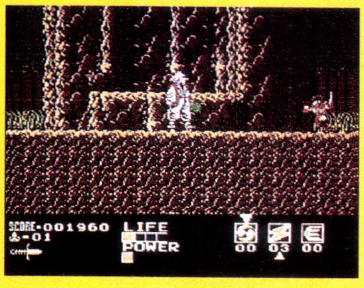
the classic struggle between good and evil comes to life. Mixed with magic and the latest computer technology, a spell-binding game for your Nintendo Entertainment System® is born!

As the hero warrior Victar, you will battle Wizards, Troglodytes, and Undead Souls. Master 7 levels and 3 worlds in your quest to conquer the demons of the Dark Lord. Traverse chasms of fire and mountains of doom to confront the fiendish Gatekeeper.

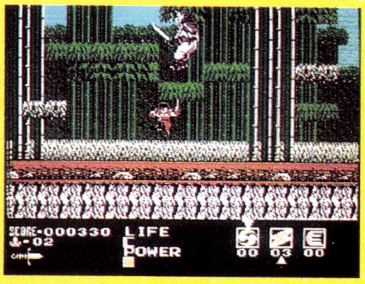
RISK IT ALL

With cunning and skill you wield the ancient and broken Demon Sword.™ To defeat the evil forces ruling the land, you must recover the Sword's missing pieces and restore its mystical power. The journey is long and the way is hard. Gather your courage, grasp your blade, and release the power that is yours to control!

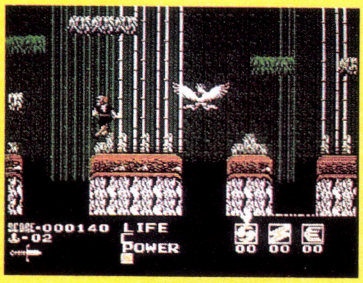
Actual Nintendo Entertainment System Screens



Beware the wrath of the Old Wizard of Cedar Mountain.



Brave the broken bridges and terrifying chasms of Bamboo Forest.



The magic of the Phoenix can save your life!

TAITO™

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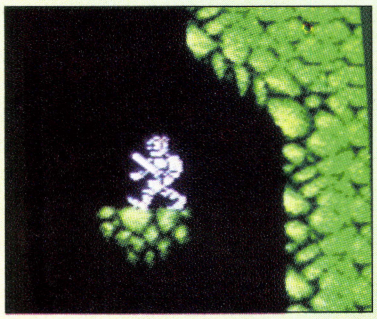
CIRCLE #108 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

Association show that nearly one American family in four—approximately 23%—now owns a home computer. Sales of home computers (factory value) rose from $3.15 billion in 1988 to $3.5 billion last year. The EIA estimates that an additional $3.75 billion worth of home systems will be sold this year.

Software sales rose 20% over the same period. More than $2.4 billion were sold in 1989, compared to about $2 billion in the previous 12-month period.

Video Characters to Star on TV

The latest wrinkle in video games is the migration of on-screen characters to television programs. The latest companies to announce



their entrance into show biz are Tradewest and Acclaim.

Tradewest has reached an agreement with CBS to bring *Double Dragon* to Saturday morning TV. The animated series is scheduled for the fall 1990 season, when the twins will double-team crime.

Acclaim plans to coproduce a syndicated daytime show for 6 to 14 year olds, based on the characters in the company's game cartridges. Currently scheduled as stars in the animated show are Kwirk the Chilled Tomato from the game by the same title, Kuros from *Wizards & Warriors* and *Iron Sword*, Max Force from *Narc* and Tyrone from *Arch Rivals*.

New Supplier for Sega Genesis Software

Toy Soldiers, Inc. (Minnetonka, Minnesota), has formed a new division named Dreamworks to create video games for the Sega Genesis. The toy company, best known for its line of stuffed toys and action figures, intends to bring the two games out in early 1990.

Shove It !—The Warehouse Game is a series of puzzles. The player is cast as a warehouse worker who must rearrange boxes in warehouse locations, which becomes increasingly more difficult to do. The game keeps track of the number of steps taken to solve each puzzle through 15 levels of ten games each, for a total of 150 warehouses.

Target Earth requires the Genesis user to protect Earth from a slew of alien invaders through eight stages. It begins with an attack on Jupiter, then proceeds to orbital battles, the defense of the Earth and (hopefully) the ultimate defeat in outer space of the invading army.

Dreamworks is captained by Patrick Feely, former president of Tonka Toys. Other officials include Loren Hildebrand, formerly with Mattel.

SPA Sponsors TV Show

Software Publishers Association is now an underwriting sponsor of *The Computer Chronicles*, a PBS-syndicated show seen in most American cities. The commercials aired during the show focus on the SPA's antipiracy efforts.

The 15-second-spot ads explain that unauthorized duplication of computer software is a federal offense, and provide the SPA toll-free antipiracy hotline number so viewers can call for more information.

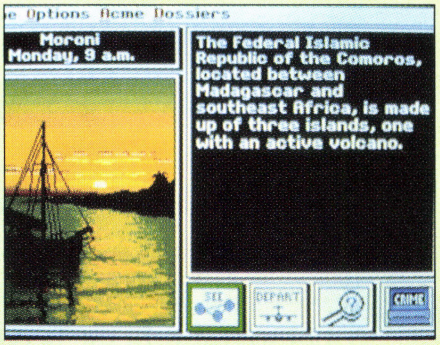
Vette! Sweepstakers Slate Trips to Frisco

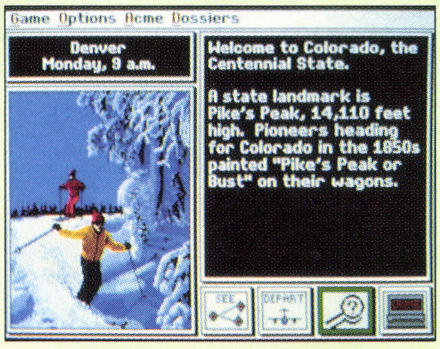
Five winners selected from random drawings by Spectrum Holobyte won four-day holidays for two to San Francisco. Each prize package included airfare, hotel accommodations and the use of a Corvette for the four-day weekend. The contest promoted the computer game *Vette!*, a driving simulation that lets users explore the streets of San Francisco, available for play on Amiga, IBM PC and Macintosh computers.

The winners were Jeff Venegas, San Diego, California; Scott Greenberg, Skokie, Illinois; Patrick Gallagher, New Milford, Connecticut; Debbie Spicer, Yukon, Oklahoma; and Joseph Allen, Aurora, Illinois.

Carmen Gets a New Look

The ever-fashionable Carmen Sandiego is sporting a fashionable new look, now that Brøderbund has completed new IBM versions of two of her detective games. *Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego?* and *Where in the U.S.A. Is Carmen Sandiego?* have fresh enhancements, including an interface with pull-down menus and digitized sound and music (supporting most add-on cards, Tandy three-voice and digital sound.)





The redone graphics now support VGA, EGA and CGA, 16-color Tandy and Hercules modes. There are color mug shots of villains, clues presented by a character instead of just in text and improved maps. Each game requires 512K of memory.

Customers who purchased *Carmen* within 90 days of the new release get a free upgrade upon return of the disks with a dated sales receipt. Otherwise, return the disks with a check for $7.50 to Brøderbund, 17 Paul Dr., San Rafael, CA 94903, Attn: *Carmen* IBM Upgrade.

Free Booklet Promotes Home Computing

The Software Publishers Association has a 32-page booklet entitled *The Other Side of Computing*, free upon request to the SPA at (800) 333-3944. The booklet describes nonbusiness uses for personal computers, including entertainment functions.

According to SPA Executive Director Ken Wasch, a surprising number of consumers know little about applications such as education, desktop video and publishing, art, music and entertainment. He went on to explain, "Our goal in developing this booklet is to help the public feel more

SHARK ATTACK!



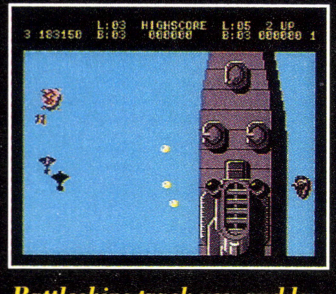
Only you and your P-40 Tiger Shark stand between your buddies and oblivion. Trapped behind enemy lines, the enemy is trying to nail you with everything they've got—fighters, tanks, battleships, anti-aircraft guns...

But you can handle it. You're the best stick man in the sky. So check your six o'clock and man your guns. The Sky Shark's got the moves if you've got the guts.

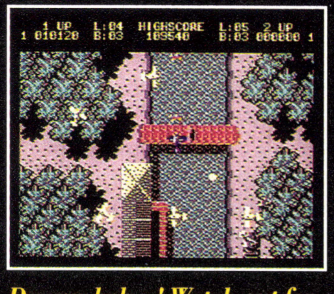
"Sky Shark...moves so fast, the enemy targets are so numerous, and the graphics so vivid..."
—Game Players Guide to Nintendo Games

"...a scrolling shoot-'em-up that combines furious action with good graphics to provide an exciting gaming experience."
—Video Games and Computer Entertainment

Actual Nintendo Entertainment System Screens



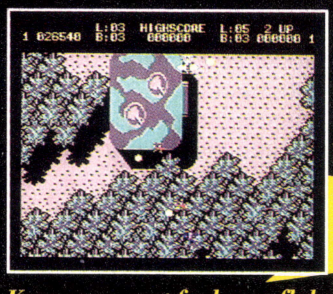
Battleships track you and lay down a carpet of deadly fire!



Danger below! Watch out for a sudden ambush!



Company at 12 o'clock. Get them before they get you!



Keep an eye out for heavy flak from camouflaged guns...

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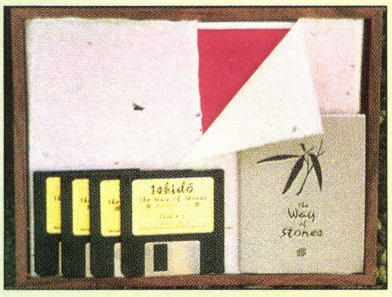
CIRCLE #109 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

comfortable with the consumer-oriented technology of the computer revolution."

In addition to an explanation of each type of software, the booklet contains over 125 names, addresses and phone numbers of the most important entertainment-software publishers, along with a handy chart with each company's categories of publishing and computer formats supported.

Publisher Boasts Limited Edition Sellout

Publishing International tried a unique method of software sales when it



shipped a 1,000-copy limited edition of the Macintosh version of *Ishido*. Each copy was numbered and signed by designer Michael Feinberg, programmer Ian Gilman and producer Brad Fregger. The product was packed in a handmade, customized wooden box and retailed for a price of $495.

The marketing experiment was an unqualified success, according to Brad Fregger, president of Publishing International. The entire balance of stock was purchased by Electronics East of Basking Ridge, New Jersey, which can be reached at (201) 766-0004.

According to Mr. Fregger, the company is working on IBM and Amiga versions of the game and hopes to be able to sell these special editions plus mass-market editions to the public soon.

Ishido is a stone-matching contest that requires users to place markers on a board in a strategic manner. It features outstanding, beautiful renditions of the stones, plus graphic editors for creating new game pieces and backgrounds, as well as a divination technique called Oracle of the Stones, based on the I-Ching.

Top Coin-Ops of January 1990

Figures courtesy of *Replay* Magazine, based on an earnings-opinion poll of operators.

Best Upright Videos

1. *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* by Konami
2. *Hard Drivin'* by Atari
3. *Cyberball 2072* by Atari
4. *Off Road* by Leland
5. *S.T.U.N. Runner* by Atari
6. *All Amer. Football* by Leland
7. *Team Quarterback* by Leland
8. *Crime Fighters* by Konami
9. *Operation Thunderbolt* by Taito
10. *Final Lap* by Atari

Best Coin-Op Software

1. *WWF Superstars* by American Technos
2. *Toki* by Fabtek
3. *Golden Axe* by Sega
4. *Vs. Crime Fighters* by Konami
5. *Caliber 50* by Romstar
6. *E.S.W.A.T.* by Sega
7. *Willow* by Capcom
8. *Arch Rivals* by Bally Midway
9. *Truxton* by Bally Midway
10. *U. N. Squadron* by Capcom

Best New Uprights

1. *Big Run* by Jaleco
2. *Galaxy Force* by Sega
3. *Rambo III* by Romstar
4. *Astayanax* by Jaleco
5. *Exterminator* by Premier

Konami Mom to Tour

Konami plans to take a specialist on tour to answer questions about video games and their effect on family life. The new company spokesperson, dubbed Konami Mom, will offer advice on buying games, how to care for the equipment and how to integrate electronic fun into a household.

Lynn Hejtmanek, Konami's director of marketing, explained why the company chose Konami Mom as their spokesperson: "Video games are a fact of life, just as television and VCRs have become. The games...can be a source of fun or frustration, depending on how they fit into the family's lifestyle. We felt sponsoring a 'spokesparent' who has successfully balanced video games with her family's lifestyle, could help other parents do the same."

Konami Mom is really Charlyne Robinson, mother of two sons, from the Chicago area. In addition to her own family, Ms. Robinson has worked with children as a substitute teacher, college counselor and caseworker for adoption and foster-care. A seven-year veteran of video gaming (her family owned early Atari and Texas Instrument systems), she explained that games must be integrated into the family routine. "Our children have become so accustomed to electronics and electronic learning that some kids find traditional learning and entertainment conventional and boring. Just as our parents had to adjust to raising kids with television, we have to adjust to video games."

Ms. Robinson speaks eloquently about video games and their role in the evolution of the American family. "So many parents are afraid of...high-tech equipment. It's easy to feel out of sync with our kids. This gives us the opportunity to get up to speed with our kids and relate on their level."

Konami Mom will be introduced in major cities around the country this autumn.

Sega Lowers Price of Master System

Sega lowered the retail price of the Sega Master System and game cartridges designed for play on the home video-game console. Starting in spring 1990, the system will retail for under $70 and the majority of Master System cartridges will be priced at under $30.

The company promises continued support of the 8-bit video-game system and introduced 12 new titles at Winter CES. So far, there are over 90 game cartridges available for play on the Sega Master System.

David Rhoads, national sales manager, commented on the company's decision to lower prices: "Lowering the prices on our Master System and 8-bit cartridges makes sense for the '90s. Genesis gives us the edge in the sophisticated high end of the market. And, with our new value-leader pricing, the Sega Master System will have outstanding appeal to the millions of cost-conscious consumers and younger video-game fans shopping for a first system."

Toy Company Introduces Electronic Games

Playtime Products, a company best known for toys, has inked licensing agreements with major electronic companies, for the marketing of games based on coin-op titles. Under an agreement with Midway, Playtime plans to introduce *Arch Rivals*, an

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JAPANESE MASTERPIECE

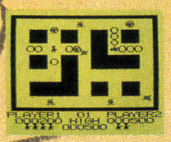


HEIANKYO ALIEN™

This is the much talked about video game that took Japan by a storm 10 years in Japan. The sound quality of this game uses the latest in high technology called Multi Matrix Sound System (MMSS). With this new Heiankyo Alien game made for Game Boy, you'll be able to enjoy 2 different versions -- the ultimate fun in New and endless fun in One. This added bonus of 2 games in 1 will make your playing more enjoyable. In addition, a new feature available only on Game Boy™ software is the 2 player opponent mode. By connecting the 2 Game Boys, 2 players can now enjoy playing this highly sophisticated game. Heiankyo Alien is a game everyone can enjoy.







9,000 years ago, an army of malicious Aliens invaded the peaceful city of Kyoto, forcing the villagers into an endless battle with the unwelcomed visitors.

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meldac

electronic pinball based on the arcade game. The company also has hand-held versions of such popular games as *Spy Hunter*, *Rampage* and *Atlantis*.

Under a new agreement with Williams Electronics, Playtime will introduce a





line of Pop Up 'n' Play travel games. These are board games with magnetic playing pieces, designed for play on the road. The Williams license includes nonelectronic versions of *Black Knight 2000*, *Earthshaker* and *Narc*.

The company also plans to expand its line of Nintendo-based products. New items for this year include a *Super Mario Bros.* cassette recorder with microphone, a line of *Super Mario Bros.* radios and *Mario's Revenge*, an electronic pinball game.

A line of hand-held electronic games will round out the line for young sports enthusiasts. The four-way control games are housed in a triangular shaped casing. Games slated for 1990 introduction are *Soccer*, *Tennis*, *Baseball* and *Football*.

Cookie Promo Gives Away 40,000 Games

An end-of-the-year promotion co-sponsored by Nabisco and Konami resulted in a massive giveaway of NES games; approximately 40,000 cartridges of *Transylvanian Adventure*, *Simon's Quest* and *Blades of Steel* were sent to winners.

Specially marked packages of Chips Ahoy! and Oreo cookies, which were available through 15,000 grocery stores, contained rub-off cards that gave the consumer a chance to win games. Other companies participating in the promotion were Acclaim and Hi-Tech.

Since it was so successful, it may well be repeated soon. Currently the participating companies are considering a similar campaign for the second and fourth quarters of 1990.

Sega Introduces Genesis Accessories, New Titles

Sega introduced add-ons to its Genesis 16-bit video-game system, to be available this year. The new Arcade Power Stick controller features ergonomic design and individual push-button control. Each button can be customized to fit the player's gaming needs.

The company announced licensing agreements with Electronic Arts, Epyx, Sphere and MicroProse, to bring leading computer-game titles to the Genesis system. Among the titles scheduled for the Genesis are *688 Attack Sub* and *Abrams Battle Tank* (EA); *Vette!* (Sphere/Spectrum Holobyte); the *Games* line from Epyx including *Summer Games*, *Winter Games* and *California Games*; and *F-15 Strike Eagle II* (MicroProse). In addition, Genesis will get a translation of *Cyberball*, a robot-football arcade game from Atari.

Michael Katz, president of Sega's consumer products division, promised more hits to follow. "We are delighted to be able to broaden the Genesis game line with such well-known and successful titles from outstanding third-party software companies. This is just the beginning of a very aggressive third-party licensing push in support of the Genesis System."

Controller Offers Slow-Mo Turbo

The latest wrinkle in sticks comes from Happ Controls, Inc., a company best known for coin-op controllers. The Competition Pro Professional Control Pad features an eight-way rosette, two fire buttons and a selection of firing speeds that ranges from manual normal fire to automatic, with a multifunction turbo switch that bombards the screen with a rain of 18 shots per second.

The Competition Pro also has a special setting for more leisurely play. The slow-motion selector reduces the speed of all on-screen activity so that even poky players can get off a scoring shot. The control pad retails for $34.95 and comes with a one-year warranty.

Floppies Come With Buyer Incentive

Fuji Photo Film U.S.A. has expanded its line of floppy disks to include two new products: the world's first 2-inch computer disk (which works with the Zenith MinisPort notebook computer) and 3.5-inch color high-density floppies. The new 3.5-inch disks come in blue, green, pink, ivory and gray and hold two megabytes of information. In addition, the company offers 3.5-inch metal floppy disks, with a potential capacity of 16 megabytes.

Current promotions offer a free 11th floppy disk, in specially marked Fuji packages of 5.25- and 3.5-inch floppy-disk ten-packs, or a handy plastic storage case with the purchase of ten 3.5-inch disks.

TurboGrafx-16 Sees a Price Decrease

Though NEC's TurboGrafx-16 video-game console was initially released in September 1989 with a $199 price tag, the electronics company has lowered the system's cost to $159, as of February 1990.

Lyn Corbett Fitzgerald, NEC's manager of public relations, told VG&CE that the move was made after it was determined the TG-16 could be produced at a lower cost, and that a broader audience was interested in the unit than originally thought. "If we can pass the value on to the consumer, it's a good reason to do it."



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If both of you are confident of your skills, come together and be the champions of the U. S.!

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A pair of winners can receive $10,000.00

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All participating retail stores will be distributing a special made Kung Fu Heroes boardgame and original button. The give aways are limited in quantity.
Step 2 Win prizes
Answer the quiz on the boardgame and enter for a drawing that could win you great prizes!

BIG CAMPAIGN PART II

Kung Fu Heroes Nationwide tournament.
Achieve the highest score with 2 players and send the screenshot of your score to Culture Brain. The top 8 teams in the U.S. will be invited for the final tourament in Los Angeles. Please look for ads in newspapers and magazines for more details. Details are also available on posters displayed at participating stores.

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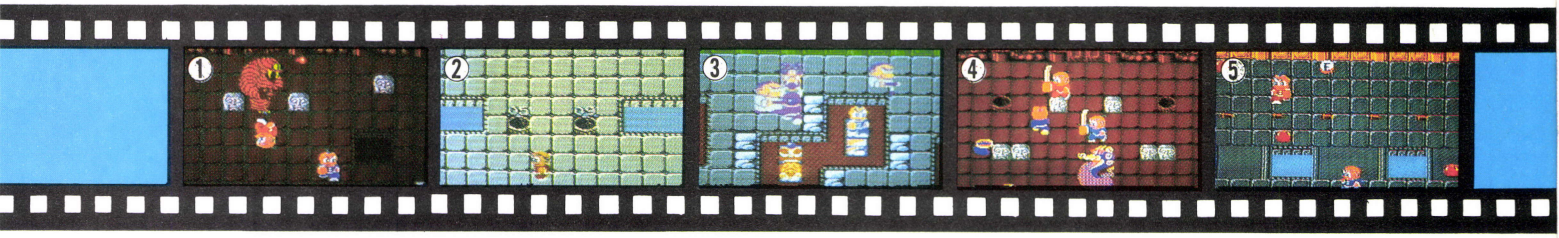
2 PLAYERS COMICAL KUNG-FU ACTION GAME

Jacky and Lee, it's up to you to break through the Demon's Castle and rescue Princess Min-Min! The exciting ARCADE HIT "Chinese Hero" is back, powered up for the NES!

KUNG-FU HEROES™

32 stages packed with action and loaded with excitement! The king of comical fighting games is here!

With family or friends, it's dual-play fun!



① Yeow! It's the huge and horrible Uni-Gon!
If you're not an expert yet, your best bet is to just run away. Use the warp tunnel to escape.

② Here it is, the warp hole!
It'll send you through another dimension to the next castle. What strange wonders are waiting on the other side?

③ A million point bonus!
There's plenty of hidden tricks, too. And here's one of them! In one of the stages, if you jump on to a suspicious-looking place, you'll get a million-point bonus! Can you discover this secret?



It's the DRAGON! Now's the time to ④ use the sword.
His scales are as hard as steel. There's only one thing that'll cut through them - the legendary sword!

All right! It's the Bonus Stage! ⑤
Go in to the underground room and rack up points! Grab as many bonuses as you can, before time runs out.

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Set forth on a journey to regain the Secret Scrolls and the hidden techniques they hold.

2. THE POWER OF JUSTICE

Only by completing the mandara seal can you gain its mystical powers and defeat Dargon, the lord of the Tusk Soldiers.

3. TRAINING SESSION

Start your training at Shorinji, the legendary birthplace of Kung-Fu.

4. DEFEAT THE SOLDIERS FROM DARKNESS

It's Dargon, and he's transformed into a deadly opponent! You'll need the ultimate move, the Hiryu-no-Ken kick, to knock him down!

5. YOU WILL BE A HERO!

Fight your way through the World Tournament of Contact Sports. Victory will be in your hands.

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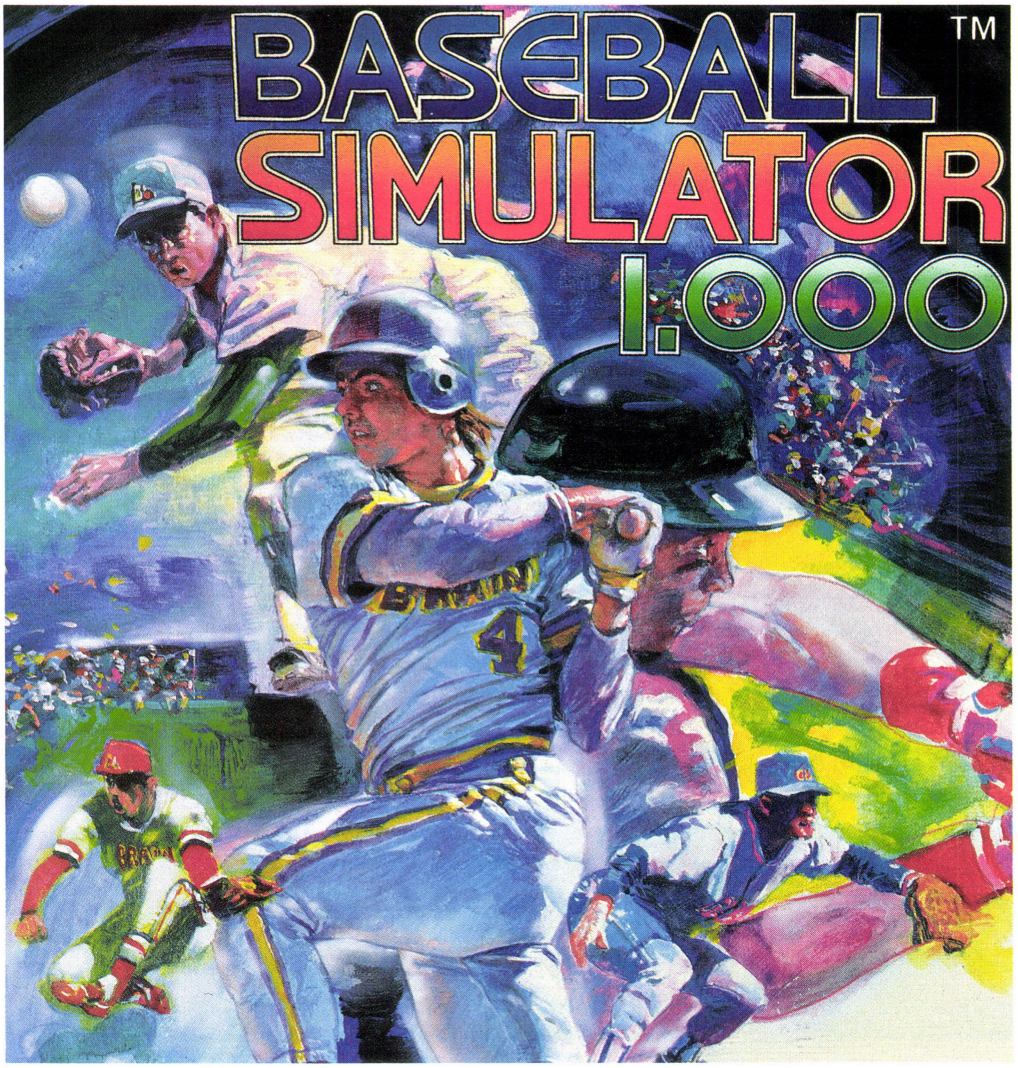
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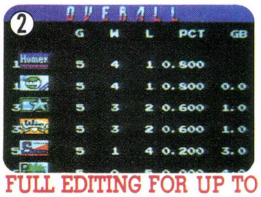
Intense and Realistic Action

Make a team of quick runners for a fast-paced game. Create players with awesome power for an all-out Home Run Derby. Or give your team the hottest hurlers for an intense pitching game. No matter what kind of game you want to play, it's all possible.

Televised Season Simulation

With the Full-Auto Season, you can play out a continuous season and watch your team from game to game. Even individual players can be tracked with full stats and top-10 rankings. Go for the triple crown!









① FULL EDITING FOR UP TO SIX TEAMS.

Play ball with your favorite major league stars, heroes from the past, fantasy leagues - even enter yourself as the star! Enter team and player names, and all the important stats for your very own team.

② A COMPLETE, SIX-TEAM, 165-GAME PENNANT RACE.

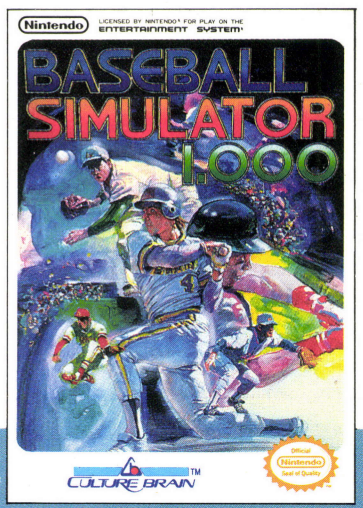
Play a full length season with six teams, for 5, 30, 60, or even 165 games. Follow the teams and players through the season - monitor their stats, even get top-10 rankings in batting and pitching.

④ FULLY AUTOMATIC SIMULATION.

Simulate a full season based on statistics. The season can be played automatically, while you can enjoy following a team through its games. And by editing team and player abilities, it's a full-auto simulation game.

③ THE HILARIOUS FEATURES OF ULTRA PLAY.

Add a whole new dimension of fun to baseball with the wacky Ultra Plays. Throw pitches that disappear or speed up in mid-air. Fight back with hits that explode or knock out the fielders. And catch them by leaping hundreds of feet in the air. With the six teams of the Ultra League, you'll play baseball like it's never been played before!



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Sophisticated Action Adventure

The ancient land of Arabia has fallen into despair. The evil magician Sabaron has released his demons from the underground, and now they are about to take over a once-beautiful land.

You have lost your memory, but you are the descendant of the legendary magician, Isfa. Now it is time to return to Arabia. You must fight to defend peace and unravel puzzling mysteries to save the kidnapped princess Scheherazade.

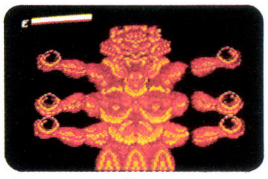
You and your allies will travel throughout the beautiful and mysterious land of Arabia, through the future and the past, and to worlds of water, deserts, forests and flowers. It's a grand adventure waiting to be fulfilled.



Raise your strength with an assortment of swords, magical rods, and special items.



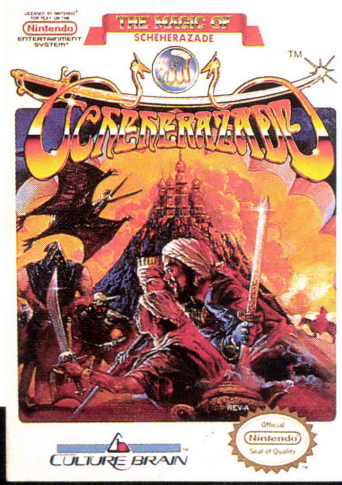
Magical spells come to life on the screen in winds of fire and storms of electricity.



Giant enemies fill the screen and challenge you to battle.



An encounter with the enemy! Create a battle formation with your allies, then fight it out with powerful magic!



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Unprecedented scale, challenging puzzles, and intense combat, unlike anything else. And a finale full of awe and wonder. The world of Scheherazade is an adventure full of glory.

2 *ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ENHANCES THE GAME EVEN MORE!*

With the support of the Artificial Intelligence programming, even beginning players can enter the magical world of Scheherazade and behold its wonders.

3 *MAGICAL BATTLES WITH ELEVEN ALLIES!*

Seek out your trusty companions and invoke an astonishing variety of magical spells. Through the past and the future, you are the hero, battling the sinister forces of evil.

4 *GRAPHICS AND SOUND FROM A WORLD OF FANTASY!*

With stunningly beautiful visuals and a musical soundtrack that will captivate your imagination. The Magic of Scheherazade is a gaming experience that'll leave you spellbound!

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VIDEO GAME REVIEWS

Bases Loaded II: Second Season

JALECO

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($46.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	8
Graphics	8
Playability	7
Overall	8

Sequels. Everybody loves to hate them. In the Hollywood industry, it's said that a movie sequel earns approximately 80 percent of what the original film made—and is probably only 80 percent as good. In the computer- and video-gaming world, sequels maintain about the same love/hate relationship with the general public. But the difference between a movie sequel and a video-game sequel is that the latter can afford to be an improvement—or revision, if you will—of the original, rather than just being a continuation.

That's the case with *Bases Loaded II: Second Season*. Actually, the more appropriate title for this yet-another-baseball game from Jaleco would be *Bases Loaded: Version 2*, as this sequel is an enhancement of an already fine NES sports game.



Bases Loaded II gives you the option of playing against either the computer or another person. There are six teams from each of two fictional baseball leagues, Western and Eastern. A full 130-game season is played against the computer. Win 75 games and you'll get the pennant and play in the World Series.

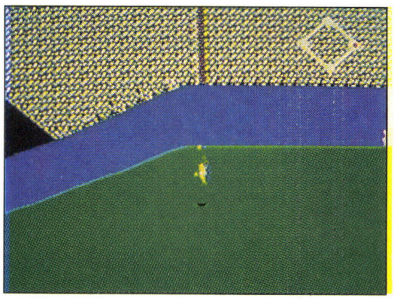
Your team can be altered by switching players or changing the team lineup. What makes *Bases Loaded II* a bit unique is that performance ratings are provided for every ballplayer in the form of a biorhythmic chart. These charts show a player's rating in the categories of physical and intellectual ability and sensitivity. How high or low a player's numbers are affects his pitching and hitting. These biorhythms are incorporated into the game's programming to simulate the streaks and slumps that real ballplayers go through, adding a "realistic" human element that's been ignored in many sports video games.

The original *Bases Loaded* had bragging rights for being the NES baseball game with the best-looking graphics. And, of course, *Bases Loaded II* gives us more of the same. The sound effects and music aren't all that enthralling, but the digitized umpire's voice is a treat to hear and useful while playing. You only need to listen to him bawl out the plays, instead of having to read a captioned call.



Unlike some other, more recently released baseball titles for the NES, *Bases Loaded II* offers no option for you to edit individual ballplayer ratings or team charts. However, the instruction manual provides 13 pages of detailed statistics on all players. This comes in handy, especially when you need to quickly edit together a powerful team to go against your opponent's, without having to plod through the necessary information on the game screen.

The intention of all this, it seems, is to challenge you to assemble an appropriate team from available players to match certain conditions that arise and the nuances of a new opposing team. Playing baseball in this way—the way a manager would—is probably much more realistic than just being given the power to easily create your own superhuman players from out of thin air.



Jaleco's baseball sequel *Bases Loaded II: Second Season* adds some features, such as player biorythyms, to enhance the game.

Nearly every detail in *Bases Loaded II* is portrayed as realistically as in true-to-life baseball. Except for one minor thing: All the ballplaying takes place in the same nameless ballpark. In an actual baseball season, teams play at several locations, on various kinds of fields and inside stadiums that look different from one another. But this is no big deal and probably won't be missed by most

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gamers. It is, however, a disappointment when you consider how simple it would have been to add such a selection, making *Bases Loaded II* the perfect rendition of a video baseball game.

All in all, *Bases Loaded II: Second Season* falls just short of qualifying as the perfect NES baseball contest. The lack of options—though really a minor consideration—can be limiting to those desiring a little more liberty in player selection and editing. As a sequel, *Bases Loaded II* doesn't provide enough to set it apart from its predecessor. But considered as a video game with an identity all its own, you can't fail with this one.

—Howard H. Wen

Jaleco USA, Inc.
5617 W. Howard St.
Niles, IL 60648
(312) 647-7085



Willow

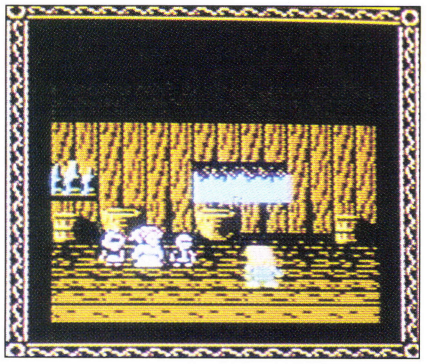
CAPCOM

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($49.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	5
Graphics	9
Playability	6
Overall	7

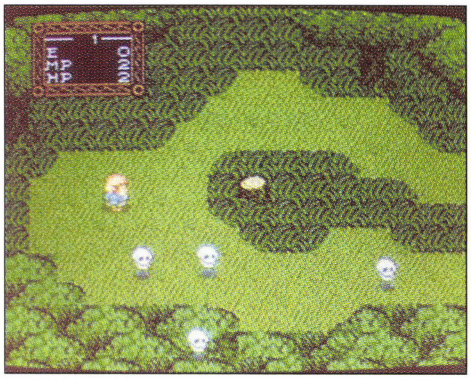
Ever since Atari's historic success at converting Steven Spielberg's 1982 blockbuster film *E.T.* into a best-selling 2600 game, video/computer games based on hit movies—usually high-concept and/or action-filled—are as commonplace in the video-game market as movie novelizations (or the preferred moniker, "tie-ins") are in the publishing industry. And, like the latter, the success of a licensed game usually depends on the box-office take of the film that it's based upon. Barely anyone remembers the George Lucas-produced *Howard the Duck*—fondly, that is. But even fewer are aware of Activision's computer-game version of that failed movie.





Interestingly enough, this leads us to the NES game inspired by another Lucas production, *Willow*. Probably one of the longest-delayed NES titles based on a movie (next to Data East's *RoboCop*), Capcom's *Willow* is finally here, nearly two summers after the premiere of the film.

Critics charged that *Willow*, the movie, had a plot with elements ripped right out of Lucas' own *Star Wars* trilogy. Incidentally, *Willow*, the NES game, has a play structure with elements taken right from a familiar classic, *The Legend of Zelda*. Yes, to quickly clear up any doubts, *Willow* is primarily an adventure game sprinkled with touches of action, categorizing it in the *Zelda* vein.





Based on the popular movie of the same name, Capcom's *Willow* takes you into the world of the Nelwyn tribe for high adventure.

You assume the role of the title character, Willow Ufgood, a humble farmer of the Nelwyn tribe. It's your destiny to bring down the evil Queen Bavmorda, who rules the land with her evil magic. Starting from your home with the tribe, you must seek out weapons and important advice from others, especially those like the High Wizard Aldwyn. Weapons include swords and shields of varying strength and power. Magical devices that act as offensive weapons, means of defense or agents for healing your character are available, as are other special items. All of these are safely stored away and easily retrieved when necessary from a separate status screen.

Once armed and readied with the preliminary knowledge you'll need, Willow must trek across the vast land in search of more clues and weapons. Along the way, you'll cross paths with allies like the great swordsman Madmartigan, Bavmorda's daughter, Sorsha, the comical brownies Franjean and Rool and Bavmorda's archenemy, Fin Raziel. Enemies include the skull-masked General Kael, trolls, ghosts and a host of other monsters and nasties. As any NES gamer might expect, the world of *Willow* encompasses an immense number of interconnected screens. Trial and error, mapping ability and patience are necessary not only to complete this game but to play it with any degree of satisfaction.

Graphics are above average, considering the given capabilities of the NES—even more so when compared to the current list of other, similar adventure games. The musical soundtrack, though, drones on, quickly tiring the senses. Another gripe, and one that we here at VG&CE brought up in our *Yea & Nay*

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column: The password-continue function not only requires you to enter an excess of 18 characters, but the letters themselves are in upper and lower case. Just what is this? *Impossible Mission*?

Like the plot to the original movie, there's nothing new or remotely unique about Capcom's *Willow*. The company itself, however, deserves high marks for producing a game with a great deal more substance and depth than most film-inspired video games, which are usually slipshod efforts with game scenarios that have little, if anything, to do with their source material. For all NES adventure gamers who just can't seem to get enough of what's already out there, *Willow* comes highly recommended—and deserves recognition for what it is on its own, apart from its cinematic counterpart.

—H. H.W.

Capcom
3303 Scott Boulevard
Santa Clara, CA 95054
(408) 727-0400

Arkista's Ring

AMERICAN SAMMY

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($39.50)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	5
Graphics	5
Playability	6
Overall	6

When a company with a name like "American Sammy" releases a game for the NES, it's bound to be interesting. *Arkista's Ring* fulfills this expectation nicely. It's a deceptively simple game that puts a few new twists on an old theme.

The adventure begins in the elven city of Arkista, whose residents have always lived in happiness and prosperity due to the presence of three magical items: a ring that perpetuates peace and harmony, an amulet of wealth and a mirror of protection. When these treasures are stolen in the night by a horde of nasty ninja, only one elf is brave enough to go after the ninja's evil leader, Shogun.

The path to the Shogun's Forbidden Castle is represented by 30 vertically scrolling areas. As in any other *Legend of Zelda* clone, the player must face many obstacles and battle a great number of unfriendly beasts before reaching the "big boss" character. Some of your opponents leave special weapons and power-up items behind when they are vanquished—that's nothing new, but at least it's a proven formula.





***Arkista's Ring*, an NES cartridge by American Sammy, matches Christine the elf against such evil beasts as the vampire Grand Master Fang.**





One of the most noticeable differences between *Arkista's Ring* and most adventure/quest games is that the main character is a female elf named Christine. To its credit, the game doesn't really make a big deal about this issue, except for the status screen, which helpfully lists Christine's vital statistics ("Sex: Female"—gee, thanks). The graphics are nothing to write home about, but there are a lot of different enemies to face and they're an extremely colorful bunch. I particularly liked the shambling, green barbarians and Grand Master Fang, a white-faced vampire.

Each of the different areas of the game features a locked exit door and a well. In order to proceed, you must defeat a certain number of enemies, after which the key to the next level will appear in the well. It's not the most brainteasing puzzle you'll ever solve, but at least it gives you a sense of direction and keeps you from mindlessly plowing through each screen at top speed.

Despite the limited graphics and simplistic game play, *Arkista's Ring* manages to work up a bit of atmosphere. In this form of entertainment, it's important to be able to lose yourself in the character; to get involved in the game and feel the excitement firsthand. Otherwise, you're just moving some stuff around on the screen, and the game becomes a $40 light show. The music is a big help here: It's not very sophisticated, but there are some cool tunes, and they make your adventure a bit more involving.

Be forewarned: If you're a fan of the latest sports titles or if serious, graphically superior action games like *Contra* or *Strider* are your bag, *Arkista's Ring* will probably bore you to tears. It's technically most suitable for the preteen set; if you're looking for a fun game for someone who fits that description, this could be the one. On the other hand, there are a lot of adults who find the majority of popular NES games to be too difficult, and for someone who might be intimidated by video games

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in general, it's nice to see a game that's playable.

Given half a chance, this game could become very popular with its (admittedly small) target audience. Unfortunately, with over 300 games now available for the NES, *Arkista's Ring* may never get the opportunity to prove itself.

—Chris Bieniek

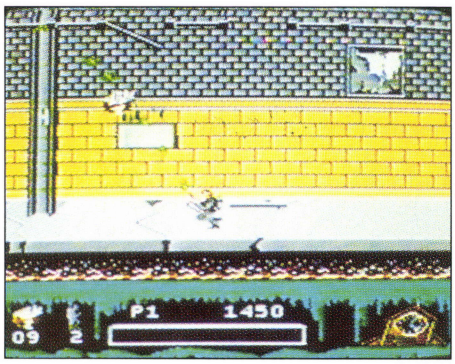
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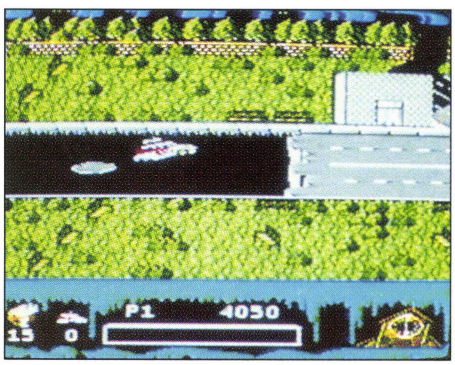
Ghostbusters II

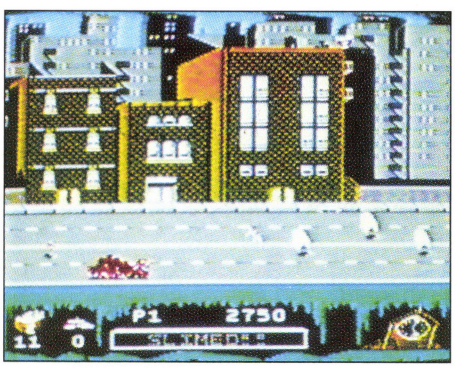
ACTIVISION

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($49.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	8
Graphics	8
Playability	5
Overall	6







Ghostbusters II is a twist on the "running-jumping" type of game, with no less than three variations built-in. Unfortunately, it's so difficult that most of the potential for fun gets buried in frustrating games that end on the first level.

In the game *Ghostbusters II*, as in the movie, the soul of Vigo the Carpathian is trapped inside an old painting being restored in the Museum of Art. The bad vibes of New Yorkers (hardly fair to people from New York, yours truly happens to be one) increase, giving Vigo more and more life. At midnight, he will emerge from the painting and reign victorious over the whole city.

There are seven levels in *Ghostbusters II*. The first takes place in the streets. You guide a ghostbuster through the streets, firing your slime gun at the ghosts, who are trying to slime you. If a ghost manages to either slime or touch you, you lose one of your lives.

There are other flying creatures that cannot be slimed, but you can drop a trap (by pressing the "START" button) that will trap both ghosts and the other creatures. These other creatures will only stun you momentarily. Unfortunately, a trap can only be dropped behind you, so it doesn't help that much.

The slime gun takes out ghosts instantly, though trapping them is worth more points. You also have to be careful when using the slime gun, because if you fire your slime up, the slime will eventually fall back to earth, slowing you down if you get caught in it. Finding the Ghostbuster logo gives you a bonus life.

Levels 3 (courtroom), 5 (subway) and 7 (museum) are all variations of Level 1, except that in Level 7 you must guide all four of the Ghostbusters to the restoration room in order to defeat Vigo.

Levels 2 (tenements) and 4 (Central Park) are the driving portions of *Ghostbusters II*. You guide the Ecto-1 through the streets, dodging ghosts and obstacles by maneuvering between lanes. You can fire the car's slime gun, which actually fires two shells: one forward (handy for wiping out ghosts) and one straight up. This last is useful because bonus blobs that fly overhead can be shot, yielding bonus abilities.

You must be careful not to shoot the red blobs, which unleash a torrent of slime on you, wiping out your car and costing you a life. The ghosts also shoot back, and any hit from slime costs a life.

If you hit an obstacle in the street, you bounce off, causing your car to stop and become a sitting duck for ghosts to take potshots at. There are also "gushing manholes." If you hit one while it's up, you bounce off, but if you manage to drive over it while it is closed, it will bounce up, shoving the Ecto-1 into the air to collect bonus items hidden high up in the buildings.



The last variation is Level 6, which takes place in Manhattan's harbor. In this level you are in charge of controlling the Statue of Liberty. You can shoot the ghosts with torch fire, but the arm can't be aimed unless you've found the torch. If you find the book, then you get a smart bomb that can be used once to wipe out any enemy on the screen. In this level, bumping into ghosts (including some invisible ones) costs life force, depending on the type of the ghost. If you lose all life force, you lose one game life.

The graphics and animation, which are coupled with a bouncy soundtrack, get good marks. The backgrounds are well detailed, and it's never difficult to tell where you are in relation to other objects on the screen. *Ghostbusters II* is an

DO NOT ATTEMPT YOUR MISSION UNTIL THE CHOPPERS ARE OVERHEAD, SNIPERS ARE IN POSITION, AND YOUR HOMEWORK'S DONE.

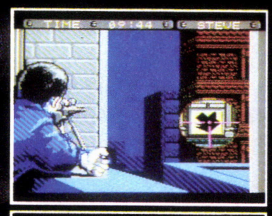
Not doing your homework could be a mistake. Every move you make could jeopardize your fellow rescuers, and those held captive.

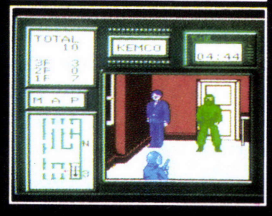
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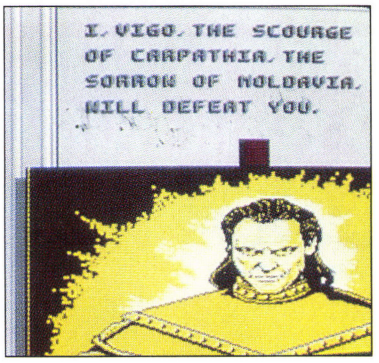
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interesting game, but extremely difficult. You must work your way through all the levels; there is no game save and no password feature. Thus, the frustration level can get extremely high as Vigo wins again...and again and again.

—David Plotkin

Activision
2885 Bohannon Drive
Menlo Park, CA 94025
(415) 329-0500



Hudson Soft's Xexyz is a fast-paced arcade contest for the NES.

Xexyz

HUDSON SOFT

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($42.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	8
Graphics	8
Playability	5
Overall	6

Xexyz (don't ask me to pronounce it) lets you control a small spaceman through many areas, battling enemies left and right to rescue the fairy queen from a castle. It sports remarkable graphics, but is extremely difficult. This is alleviated somewhat by a password system that allows you to skip the settings you've conquered.

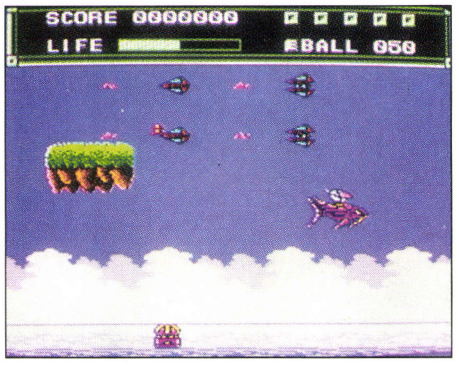
The spaceman is maneuvered using the control pad and can jump, duck and move left and right. He fires in the direction he's facing or straight up and can get a variety of additional weapons to help in his quest. A life bar at the top of the screen measures current life status, and each encounter with an enemy shortens this lifeline till it's gone. Falling into a chasm will instantly lose you a life.

There are basically two types of settings in *Xexyz*. In the first type, your spaceman walks around, jumping over various obstacles and shooting at just about anything that moves. The landscape consists of a background that sometimes breaks into multiple heights, in which case you have the option of which ledge to use.

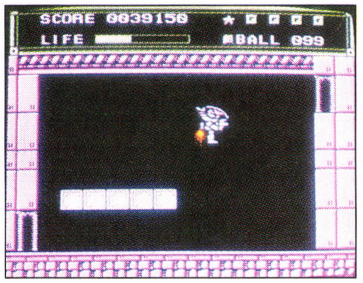
There are a variety of surprises in this setting. For one thing, there are star columns that must be hopped over. However, some of them hide secret doors. If you shoot one, a door opens that you can jump into, which usually results in a battle royale with a nasty enemy. The worst is a large Buddha-like creature that shoots multiple bullets at you. He must be defeated in order to retrieve a "force star," without which you cannot leave the current setting. Unfortunately, he's so nearly impossible to defeat that I suspect many will never get beyond the first setting.

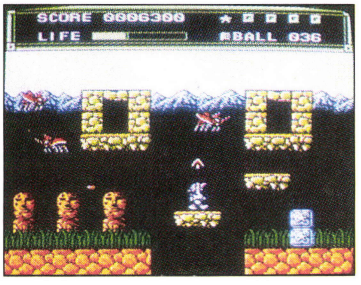
There are other clearly marked doors on the ledges. Some hold a benign creature who will give you more powerful weapons, such as the wave ball or the awesome moon beam. These weapons are necessary to even hope to survive. Other doors hide little fairies who give clues as to what to look for, which star column to shoot, etc. You can even encounter a weapons salesman inside some doors; he'll sell you weapons—if you can pay the price.





The currency is energy units, which appear when you shoot an enemy. Running over the energy units adds them to your collection. The enemies on this first type of level are all manner of creepy-crawly interplantary creatures, spacecraft and space insects. Most can be dispatched with one hit, especially with a hit from one of the more powerful weapons, though some require more.





In the second setting, you fly astride some sort of shark, shooting two different types of weapons. Various power-ups can be used to increase weapon power and the number of directions the weapon fires in. This can be real handy when the enemies (usually various undersea creatures) are coming from all sides and shooting back. About halfway through, the screen speeds up, and things get really hectic. Each setting culminates with a gigantic (and hard to defeat) creature that must be shot many times before you're victorious.

You start the game with three lives and can continue three times after you've lost them all. Each new life is started at the beginning of the current

Boys Mode

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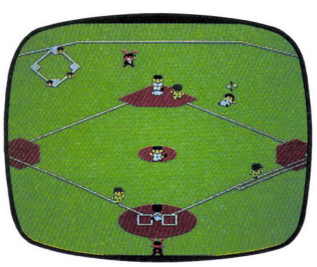
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setting, which is somewhat painful because you end up playing the beginning of a setting many times. When the game is over, you're given a password so that you can come back again and start at the beginning of the last level you mastered.

The soundtrack is excellent, from the background music to the audible groan that comes from a giant protagonist when he gets hit repeatedly. The graphics are sharp and there is no flickering, even when many objects are on the screen at the same time. *Xexyz* is very challenging and a difficult game to master, but well worth the effort.

—D. P.

Hudson Soft USA
400 Oyster Point Boulevard, Suite 515
South San Francisco, CA 94080
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Alex Kidd in the Enchanted Castle

SEGA

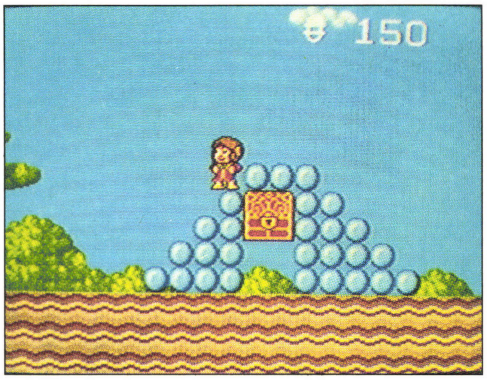
For the Sega Genesis ($44.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	7
Graphics	9
Playability	8
Overall	8

In this reviewer's opinion, *Alex Kidd in Miracle World* was one of the best games released for the Sega Master System. Its interesting worlds and addicting game play kept you hooked and playing till the end. Sega, too, realized that their big-eared boy hero was a winner: They released several sequels, although none was as good as the original. Now, with the coming of Sega's new Genesis system, *Alex Kidd in Miracle World* has been dusted off, polished up and upgraded for the 1990s. *Alex Kidd in the Enchanted Castle* is here, and it's been worth the wait.

This time around, Alex's dad, King Thor, has turned up missing. Determined to solve the mystery, Alex travels to the planet Paperock in search of Sky Castle, where Ashra, King Thor's kidnapper, resides. On Paperock Alex discovers that every creature is under Ashra's command. They are all determined to keep Alex from his goal.

Alex Kidd in the Enchanted Castle, although a new adventure, is heavily based on the *Miracle World* game. The scenes through which Alex must travel are eerily reminiscent of those in the original. Also, our hero enjoys the same punching and jumping abilities, albeit with new twists. While Alex still has the power to break blocks with his punch, he can now send them sliding across the floor into enemies. In addition, Alex's jump has been upgraded to an offensive weapon, the jump-kick.

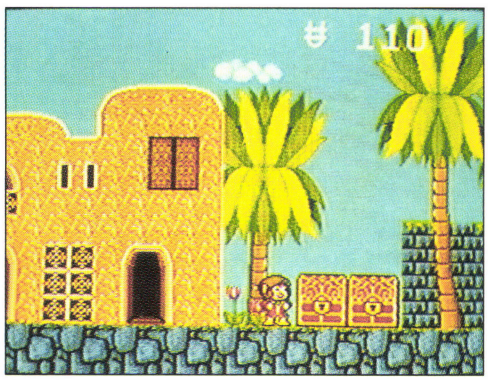


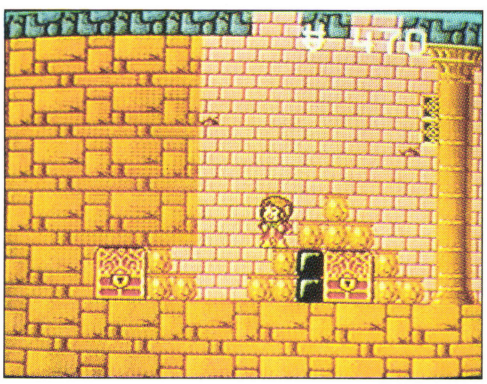
Many of the vehicles are also the same, with Alex riding the Sukopako motorcycle, a fast-moving ground vehicle, and the Pedicopter, a foot-powered helicopter. New to the game is the pogo stick, which gives Alex high-jump capabilities.

During his travels in Paperock, Alex will come upon various obstacles, including breakable rocks, which he can punch apart or push; indestructible rocks, which he can push only; and rubber rocks, on which he can bounce. Treasure chests are everywhere and may contain gold or other special items, such as bombs that Alex must avoid.

Special items that are obtained by winning Janken matches (paper-scissors-rock) include the power bracelet, which allows Alex to shoot; the wizard's cane, which gives Alex the ability to float; the cape, which makes Alex invincible for a short time; and the token, which allows Alex to read the minds of his Janken opponents. The aforementioned Sukopako motorcycle, pedicopter and pogo stick may also be obtained by winning a Janken match.

Making the successful jump into the 16-bit game market, Alex Kidd will delight Genesis owners with his new exploits *Alex Kidd in the Enchanted Castle.*





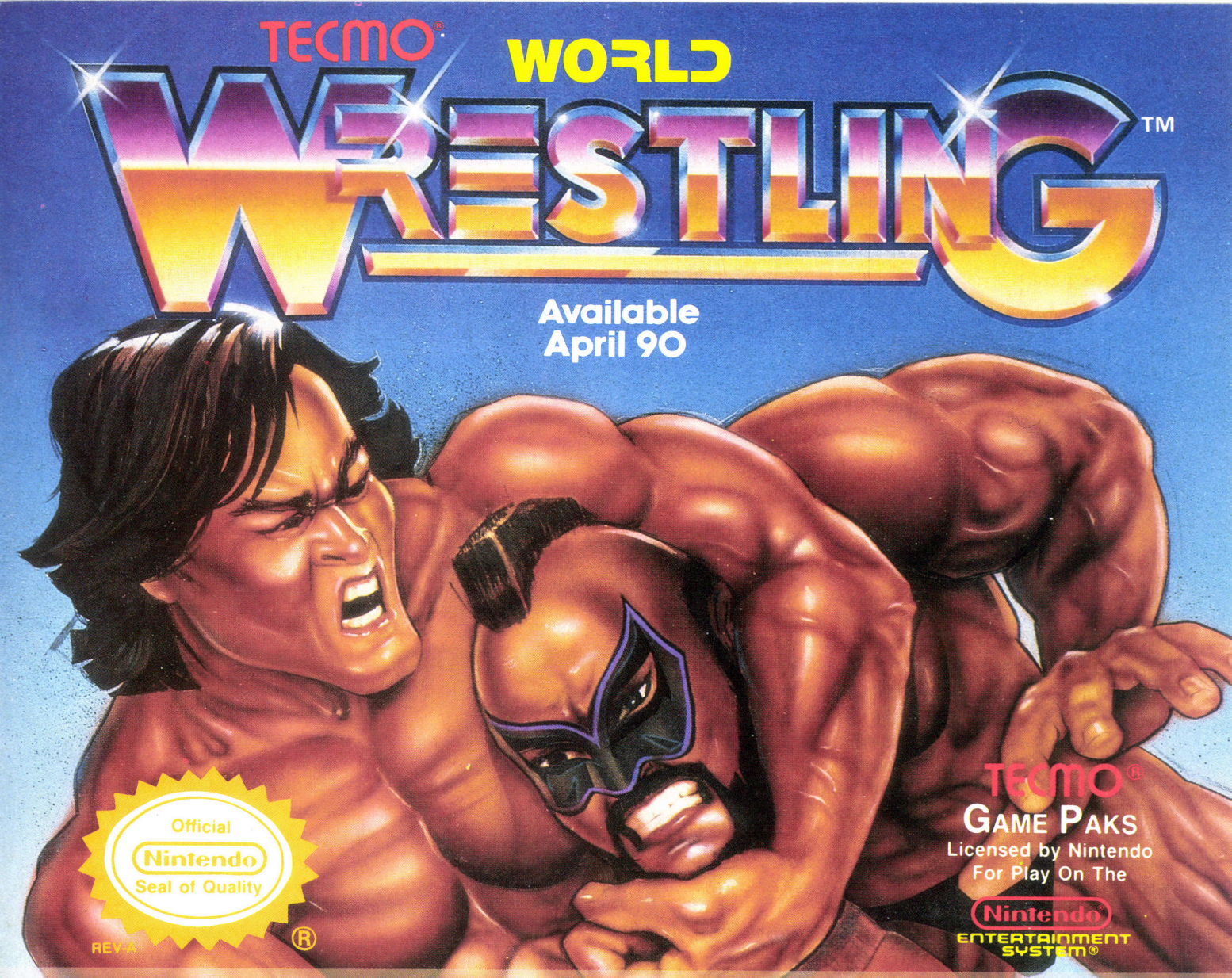
Like any good arcade adventure, *Alex Kidd in the Enchanted Castle* contains many secret rooms. For example, if Alex jumps in the right place, he'll discover an underground chamber filled with valuable treasure and dangerous monsters. Surprise discoveries such as these go a long way toward maintaining the game's playability.

Alex Kidd in the Enchanted Castle consists of 11 rounds, each of which is set in its own "world." Alex will travel through towns, prairies, oceans, deserts, forests, jungles and mountains before finally reaching Sky Castle, the last

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REV-A

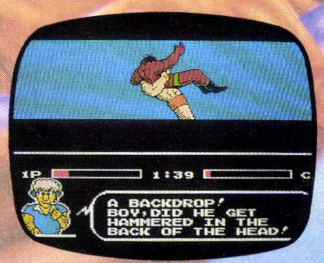
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FEATURES:

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round. The graphics are vivid and fanciful and are rendered in the simulated three-dimensions that are a Genesis trademark.

With *Alex Kidd in the Enchanted Castle*, Alex Kidd fans get a chance to adventure with their hero in a state-of-the-art video game, filled with challenging arcade scenes and plenty of surprises. My vote: recommended.

—Clayton Walnum

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573 Forbes Blvd.
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Crystal Mines

COLOR DREAMS

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($39)

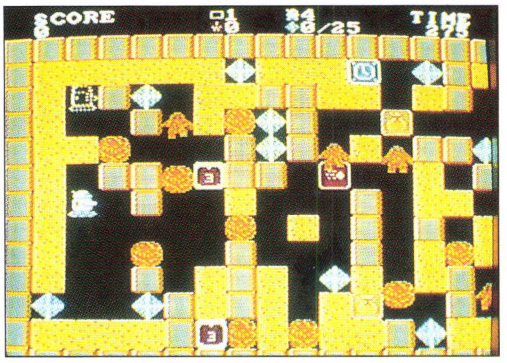
RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	6
Graphics	6
Playability	9
Overall	7

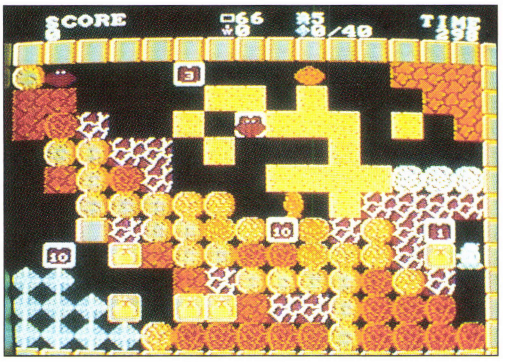
One of my all-time favorite computer games was a cave-exploring arcade contest called *Boulder Dash*. (See the interview with its creator, Chris Gray, on page 98.) Its combination of charming graphics, clever sound effects and addicting game play made it an instant hit. It even won a software award or two. Now for the NES, we have *Crystal Mines*, a game similar to *Boulder Dash*, although lacking much of that earlier game's charm.

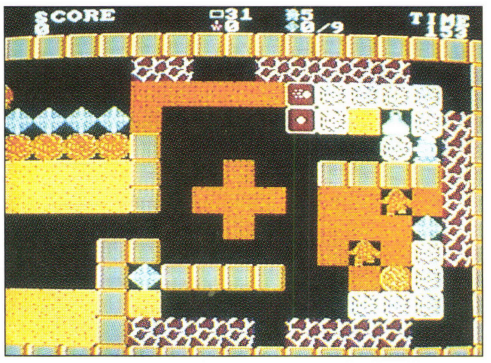
In *Crystal Mines* you control a robot whose job is to search through mazes, gathering crystals and destroying creatures. In each maze a predetermined number of crystals must be obtained, after which a doorway to the next maze opens. Although completing a maze requires strategy, a timer ticks steadily downward, forcing speedy decisions. No dilly-dallying allowed here!

You'll face obstacles, of course, including various types of boulders, dirt, rock and mud. Boulders, like most objects, come in several types: Soft boulders can be destroyed with your energy gun; hard boulders are vulnerable only to bombs; impervious boulders are indestructible; and explosive boulders turn into bombs if touched by energy or an explosion. All boulders may be pushed by your robot, either to move them or to drop them on unwary creatures. Great caution must be used, however, to avoid being clobbered by a boulder yourself.

In the higher levels, obstacles become more treacherous. You'll face radioactive rocks that reflect your energy blasts and kill you with radioactivity; mud that ever so slowly expands, metamorphosing into dirt, hard mud or lava; and lava, which, like mud, grows and changes.







Reminiscent of *Boulder Dash*, Color Dreams' *Crystal Mines* requires the player to search through mazes, picking up valuable crystals along the way.

Enemies such as rock creatures, mud creatures, lava creatures and gas creatures also occupy the mazes. Like the boulders and other obstacles, enemies have different strengths and weaknesses. Some can be shot; others must be destroyed using more creative methods, such as dropping boulders or placing bombs.

As you dig through the mines, you'll uncover special items. The rapid-fire icon increases the number of energy blasts you can fire at one time. The range-increase icon gives your weapon a longer range of fire. Bomb icons add bombs to your inventory. Gold bags add to your score.

Some icons offer creature protection, explosion protection, mud/lava protection or radiation protection. In addition, you may find a clock that briefly stops time, a freeze-robot icon that temporarily paralyzes your robot (avoid that one) or a 1-Up.

Each level (there are over 80) is a puzzle requiring thought and strategy to complete. If you venture blindly forward, you'll soon run into such problems as releasing more creatures than you can handle at one time or surrounding crystals with impervious boulders. You may even trap your robot. In situations like these, the self-destruct sequence, which restarts the level, comes in mighty handy.

If you liked *Boulder Dash* (available only on personal computers), you'll get a kick out of *Crystal Mines*. It's not as addicting as its predecessor, but it's definitely a worthwhile investment.

—C. W.

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J.J. and Jeff

NEC

For the TurboGrafx-16 ($39)

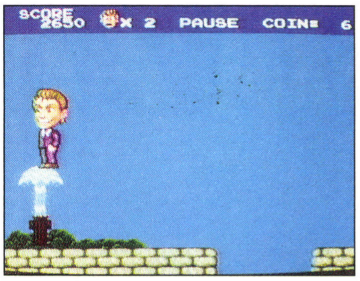
RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	8
Graphics	8
Playability	8
Overall	8

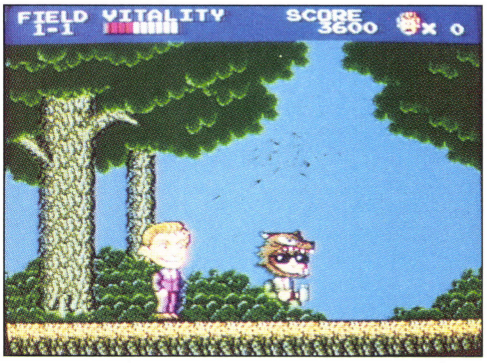
When I first saw the Japanese version of this game, named *Kato and Ken*, I couldn't believe my eyes. To see the main characters running around the screen using perhaps the most deadly of all *manmade* weapons (let's just say they ate too many refried beans for lunch) was, to me and everyone else that played it, one of the funniest sights we had seen in a video game in a long time. Apparently the Japanese condone such behavior in their games, but for NEC to bring this game to the States they had to tone it down considerably. And tone it down they did.

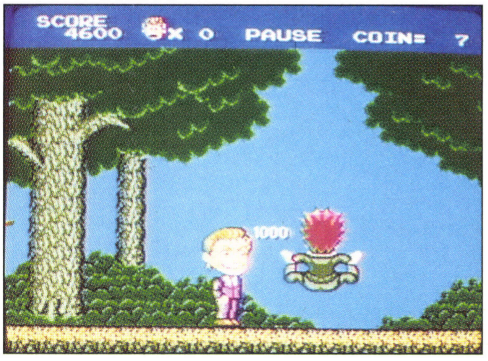
J.J. and Jeff is the *new* incarnation of *Kato and Ken*. It's the tale of two bungling detectives who are out to rescue a rich man from an evil kidnapper, Boss Kara. You, the player, can choose which detective you want to control through eight hilarious stages of play. But there's one problem; you've decided to go at it alone, which makes your partner jealous, and now he's out to slow you down.

Not only must you contend with your partner, but you must avoid characters like Crabby the crab, Stinker the fly and Jerry Jaws the flying fish. To help you along the way you've been given two basic methods of attack. You can first try kicking the enemy. If that doesn't work, try using your trusty spray can (that's right,it's still a gas, but in a spray can). You can also jump on top of some bad guys to get rid of them, although this is not listed as a means of attack in the manual.

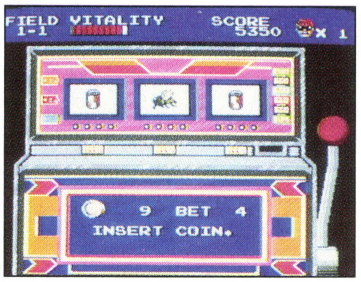
J. J. and Jeff uses a life meter (vitality gauge) that decreases with time and with injuries incurred by any of your assailants. There are several ways to regain life as well as increase your vitality gauge. Fruit and other food items are scattered throughout each area, and all replenish life. In each area there are a number of houses, and by entering a house you can obtain vital clues and receive a full vitality gauge.











NEC's *J.J. and Jeff* is a laugh a minute and full of arcade action.

In other special houses along your trek, you'll find a slot machine; here you can receive extra men, life and also increase your vitality gauge. To play, simply collect all the coins you find. The more coins you use, the bigger reward you'll receive.

Well, all good detective stories have plenty of mystery and suspense, and *J. J. and Jeff* is no exception. With each new game you'll discover hidden fruit, coins and secret screens. The key to finding these special items is kicking; you'll want to kick everything in sight. There are also a few warp springs, which will advance you farther into the game, and they're tough to find. To discover them you'll have to fall off ledges at the right spot, without losing a life.

I don't think *J. J. and Jeff* uses the full capabilities of the TurboGrafx-16, graphically or musically. The graphics are not very detailed, and the music repeats itself. For some games, not having excellent graphics or music would be fatal. As for *J. J. and Jeff,* the overall game play and hidden goodies (like in *Adventure Island,* another Hudson Soft game with a similar theme) are what make this game a winner. Even though NEC had to change some aspects of the game from the original Japanese version, it's still as fun as ever. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have a rich man to save.

—Donn Nauert

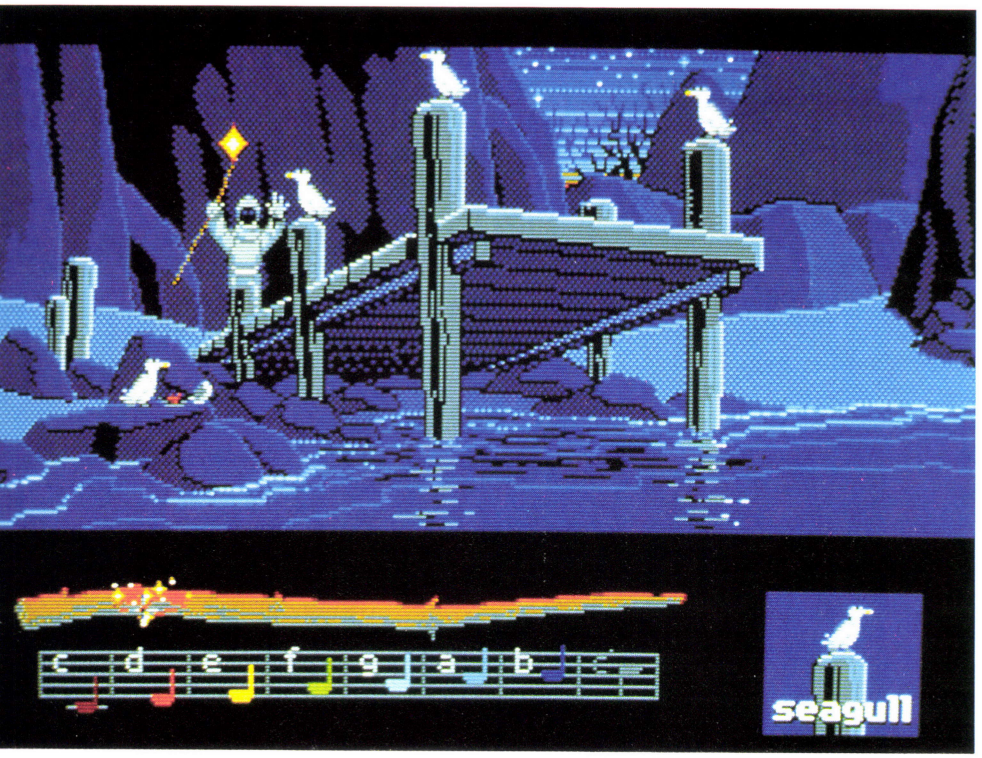
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Herzog Zwei

SEGA

For the Sega Genesis ($44.95)

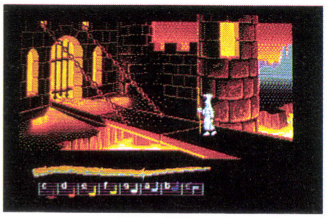
Herzog Zwei is a third-party entry into the Genesis realm, having been developed by TechnoSoft. Some consider



The game is fantasy. The interface is magic.

Alone on a craggy hilltop, high above an island shrouded in perpetual mist, your quest begins. But tread gingerly, because while the world of *Loom*™ is breathtakingly beautiful, unspeakable danger awaits the unsuspecting.

Trepidation soon gives way to bravado as you peek inside abandoned tents in the village. Stumbling over a discarded weaver's distaff, you watch in wonder as it gradually glows and resonates with a sequence of musical notes. Tentatively at first, you point the staff and repeat the notes. After considerable experimentation, you may discover the power to see in the dark. Or weave straw into gold. And eventually find the means to leave the island itself.



Not all the Guilds welcome strangers.



A spell weaver's power is not for the sheepish.

A fantastic odyssey ensues, as menacing waterspouts, merciless dragons and exotic cities draw you deeper and deeper into the fantasy. Armed with the distaff's magic power, you stride fearlessly across vast, cinematic landscapes. Seeking the arcane knowledge possessed by the Great Guilds, accumulated and refined since the dawn of time.

Typing is banished from this kingdom.

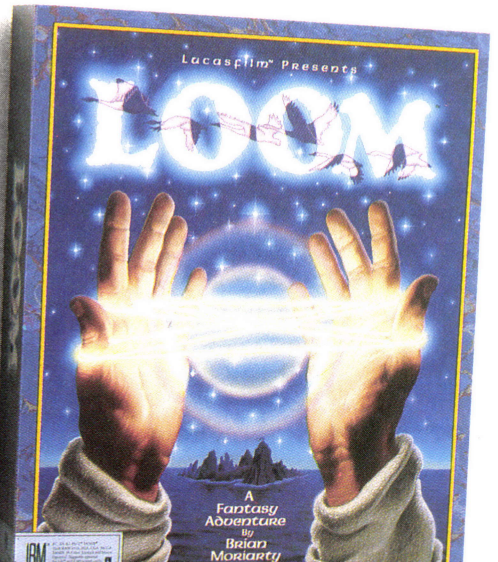
Loom is more than a masterpiece of fantasy storytelling. With *Loom,* Lucasfilm™ Games literally redefines the fantasy computer game experience. Simple point n' click actions move your character, select objects, and perform magic. No cumbersome keystrokes, text parsing, maze mapping, or inventory management intrude to break the spell.

We even transport you to the Age of the Great Guilds before you turn on the computer. With a lavishly produced, 30-minute drama on Dolby® Stereo audio cassette that's included with the game. Recorded by Lucasfilm's Academy Award-winning Sprocket Systems, it introduces the characters and sets the scene for the impending, epic struggle against imposing odds.

Then it's full immersion into *Loom*'s 3-Dimensional, scrolling panoramic landscape. Where detailed animation, high definition graphics, startling special effects and stirring musical score combine to create a total environment. Captivating you from the opening scene to the final climax.

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the first crop of Genesis games, all of which were produced by Sega itself, as a mediocre demonstration of the system's potential—not only as far as sound and graphics, but also in complexity. The Genesis' innards make it capable of more than running and jumping games. Thus hopes have been high that third-party developers would exhibit greater efforts to bring Genesis games up to speed.

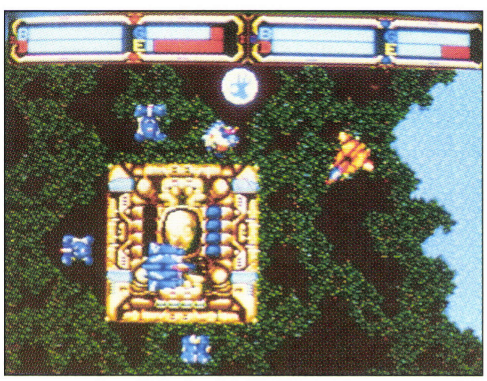


RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	6
Graphics	8
Playability	7
Overall	7

Herzog Zwei ("Duke Two") is such an effort, a unique arcade game played at breakneck speed, yet with all the strategic elements of a sophisticated war game. Striking out into territory that obviously could not be adequately charted with lesser equipment, it lets two players manage multitudes of troops, vehicles and weapons while displaying complex, fast-moving graphics in split-screen format. Though tough to learn, a clearly written 25-page manual is provided, and the computer is a good teacher.

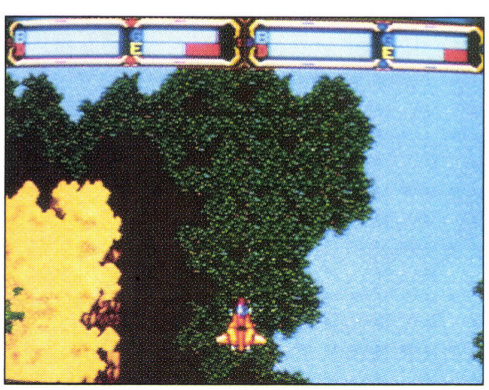
In the simple plot, you're High Commander Ludwig, leader of the forces in rebellion against the evil oppressor Herzog Eins...Supreme Commander One. For each of the eight battles that comprise the war, your forces and your enemy's are balanced in resources. How quickly you decide which weapons or vehicles or men to buy and deploy and how deftly you implement your strategy with the joystick, determines whether you perish or prevail.

You can play against another human, against the computer or you can have the computer play against itself. There's no provision, unfortunately, for the TeleGenesis modem, so you can't play with armchair despots around the world. You also have the option of using a password system to keep track of which scenarios you've played. Win all eight battles against the computer, at each of the four different skill levels (32 battles total), and you win the war—and can expect to be properly rewarded. That's a Herculean task, though. Even at the lowest setting, the computer is a cruel and quick opponent.





***Herzog Zwei* is a mix of radical shoot-'em-up and war game.**



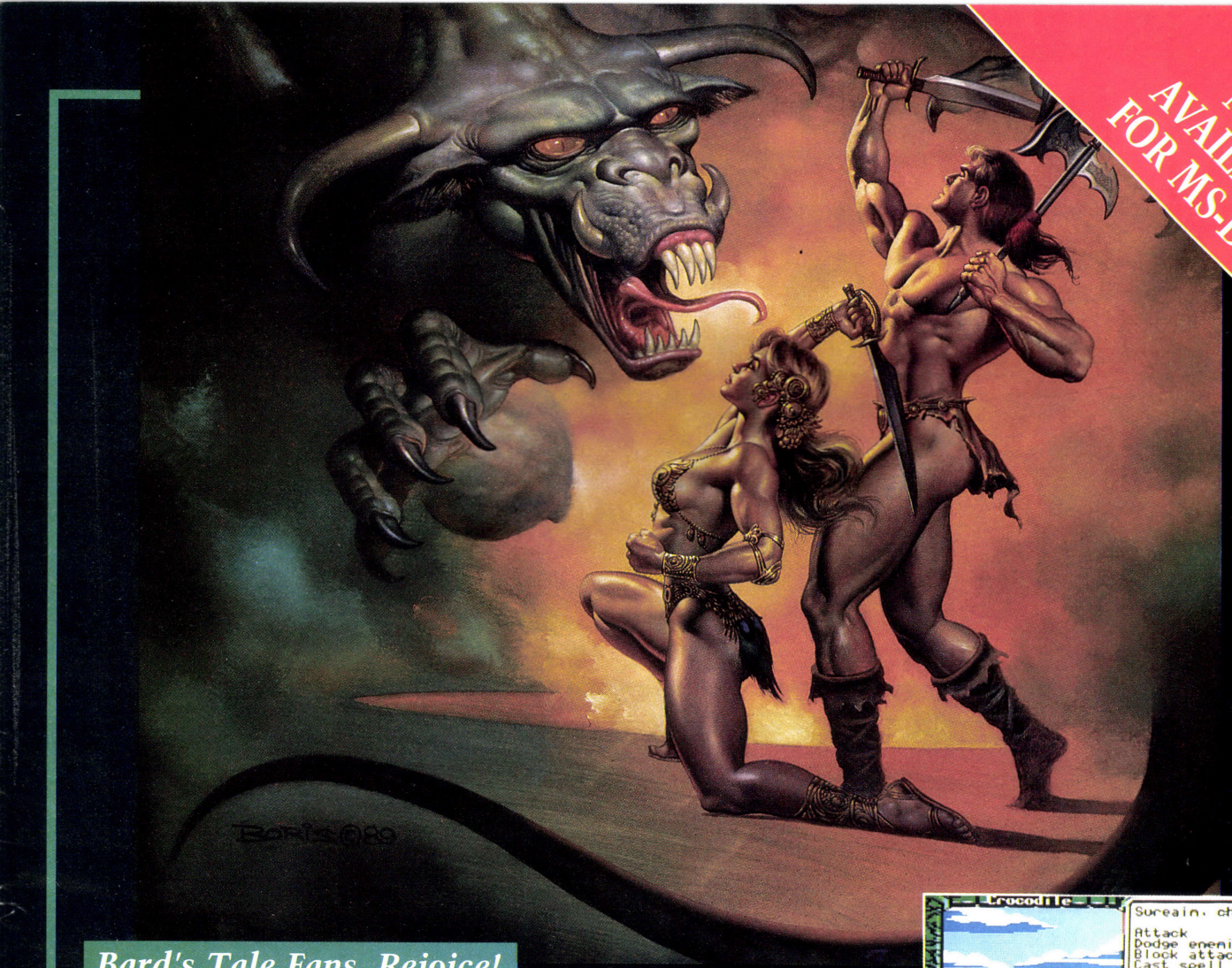
The battles take place over varying terrain that scrolls beneath you as in *Thunder Force II*. The terrain is beautifully done, with bubbling lava, rippling water and other dynamic details, but without the 3-D multilevel effect of other Genesis games. The screen is split (with the option of a single, widescreen view when playing against the computer) and each side works independently. You control the movements of your "fighting force," which is either an attack jet, an infantry or an air transport—depending on the situation. At times, you'll directly attack the opposition's forces, but your primary task is to create and deploy as many armored cars, tanks, boats, trucks, cannons and infantry soldiers as you can. Each such item requires an appropriate command from a list of eight. A command screen pops up at the touch of a button, with current information and a radar window.

You have to watch your money and your fighting force's energy level. Energy can be replaced at base camps, and your overall objective is to capture all the neutral or enemy base camps while defending your own. Then you destroy the enemy's main base camp, and that's how you win a battle.

This game, with its frantic flicker-free graphics and dizzying strategic angles, is more than a match for any computer war game. But I believe *Herzog Zwei* is the first of its kind, and for those who enjoy wild shoot-'em-ups and war simulations, it's a superb and definitive crossbreed.

—Joshua Mandel

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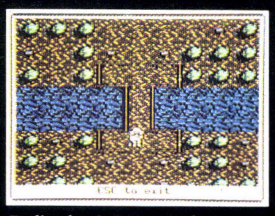
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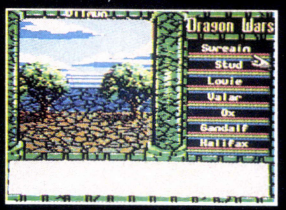
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MILITARY MADNESS

STRATEGY & TACTICS

BY LEE H. PAPPAS

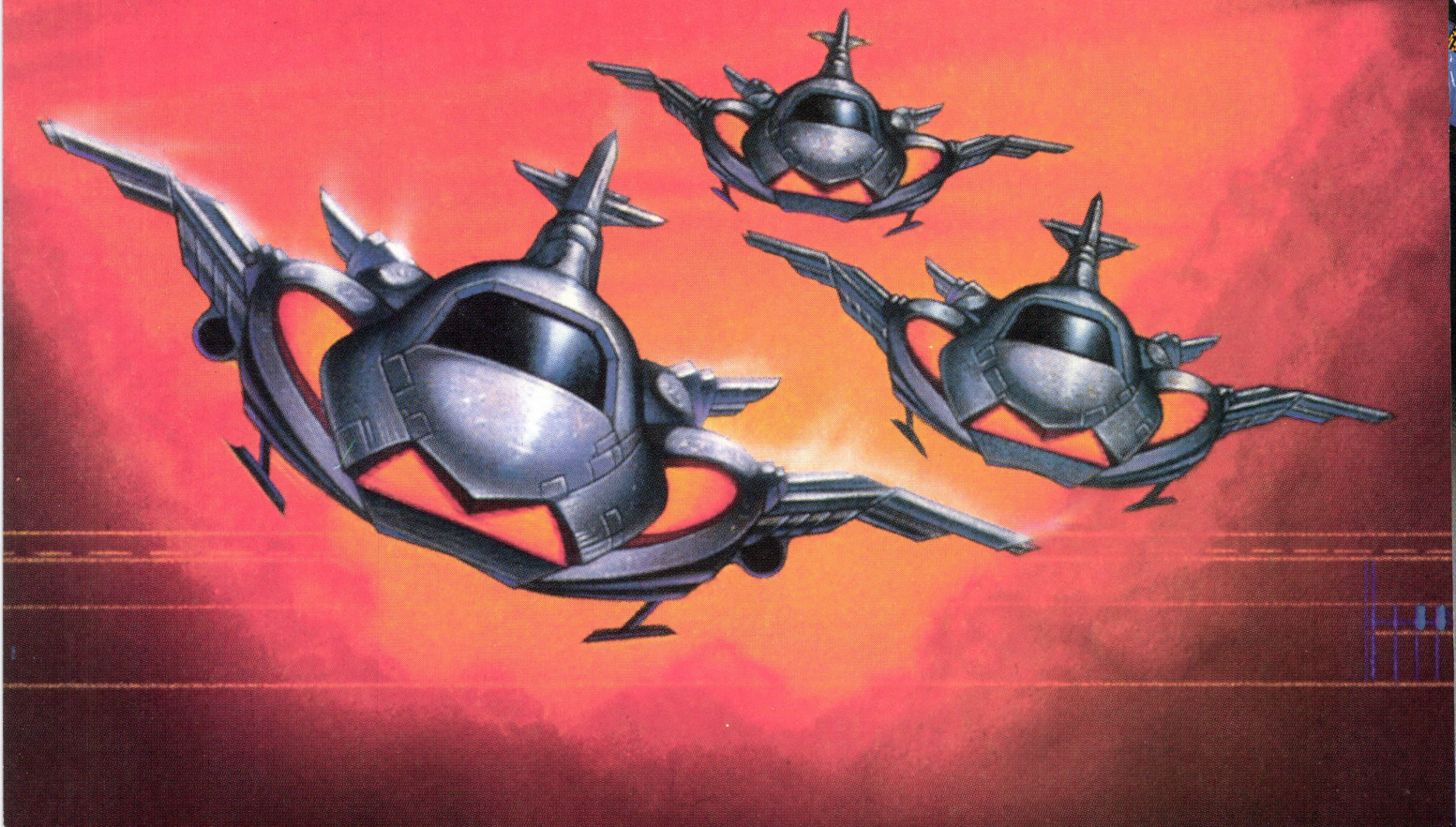
STAGE LEVEL CODES

1st MOON

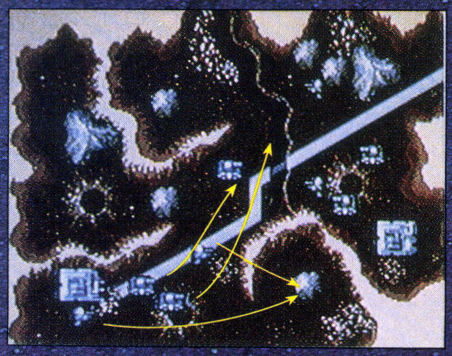
Stage 1	Stage 5	Stage 9	Stage 13
REVOLT	NEWTON	GALIOS	BORMAN
Stage 2	Stage 6	Stage 10	Stage 14
ICARUS	SENECA	DARWIN	APOLLO
Stage 3	Stage 7	Stage 11	Stage 15
CYRANO	SABINE	PASCAL	KAISER
Stage 4	Stage 8	Stage 12	Stage 16
RAMSEY	ARATUS	HALLEY	NECTOR

2nd MOON

Stage 1	Stage 5	Stage 9	Stage 13
MILTON	TETROS	MONOGA	ERATIN
Stage 2	Stage 6	Stage 10	Stage 14
IRAGAN	ARBINE	ATTAYA	SOLCIS
Stage 3	Stage 7	Stage 11	Stage 15
LIPTOS	RECTOS	DESHTA	SAGINE
Stage 4	Stage 8	Stage 12	Stage 16
INAKKA	YEANTA	NEKOSE	WINNER




FOR THE
TurboGrafx-16



STAGE 1—REVOLT

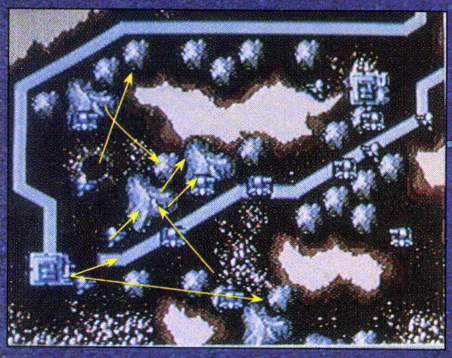
You can consider this a training level. The key to this map is the bridge. Position your tanks *off the road*, blocking the enemy tanks. You already start out with an advantage of three Bison tanks against their two. One of the tricks to winning the game is to let the enemy come to you. Don't play aggressively, but conservatively.



Block the advancement of the enemy tanks while forcing them to stay on the road.



Here you get terrain and support advantages.



STAGE 2—ICARUS

Put all your Bisons on the rocky hills. This gives you terrain advantage and forces the enemy tanks to attack from the road.



You also have five tanks to the enemy's three. Stay on the rocks.



Surround the enemy Bisons on both sides, and you'll destroy them quickly.



STAGE 3—CYRANO

This map is the first you'll experience that includes a factory. Pin down the enemy tanks by blocking them on two sides. As soon as the SG-4 Hadrian appears, attack it. The trick here is to prevent the enemy from recycling weapons in the factory. Capture the factories before they have a chance to use them.



Place your tanks on opposite sides, and notice how much your attack power goes up.



The enemy factory contains a GX-87 and a SG-4. Damaged enemy tanks can use the factory to repair themselves. A repair takes one turn to enter the factory and one to take it out.



STAGE 4—RAMSEY

This map uses two screens that scroll up and down. The best tactic here is to hold your ground, and let the enemy come to you. Don't huddle near your main base, but use your factories as holding ground. One tip that helps in all levels is to use your GX-77 or -87 troops as lures for enemy artillery.



Bring your GX-87 troops to the neutral factory. Protect them from the spaceships using your AAG-4. Block tanks coming in from the right.

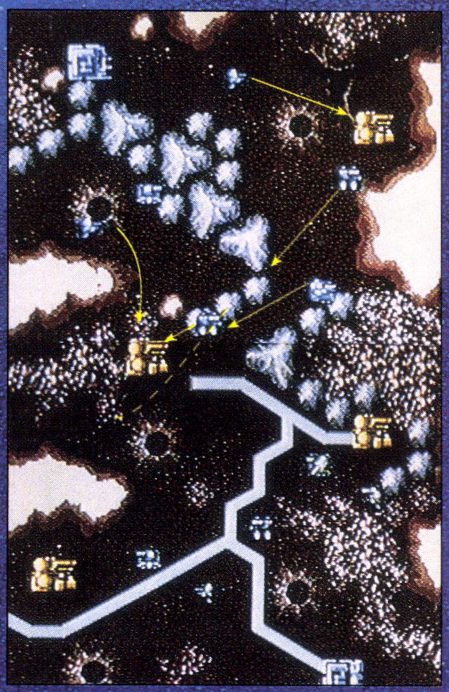


AAG-4 gets better defense if it's on a hill or rocks. Blocking in the spaceships on two sides will destroy them faster.



Use your Hadrians to shell the enemy.





STAGE 5—NEWTON

Take the two factories and move your anti-spacecraft units into place. You must establish a frontline battle force just below your lower factory.

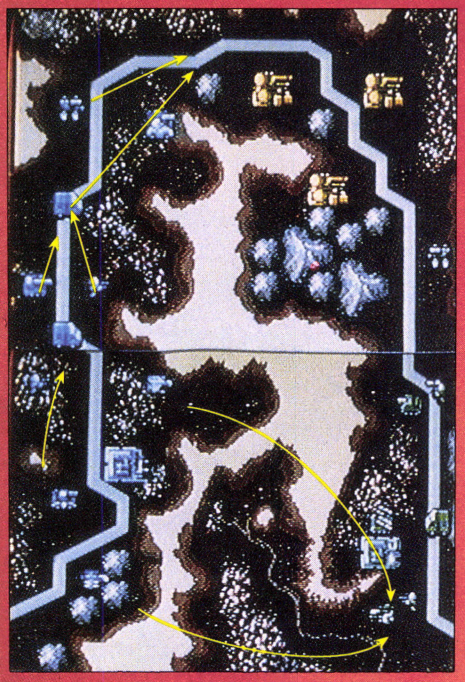


It's important to hold this factory. Use it to repair damaged vehicles. Anytime a weapon has five or less units, repair it.





Hit the Hunters with the Hawkeye missiles first, then bring in the Seekers.

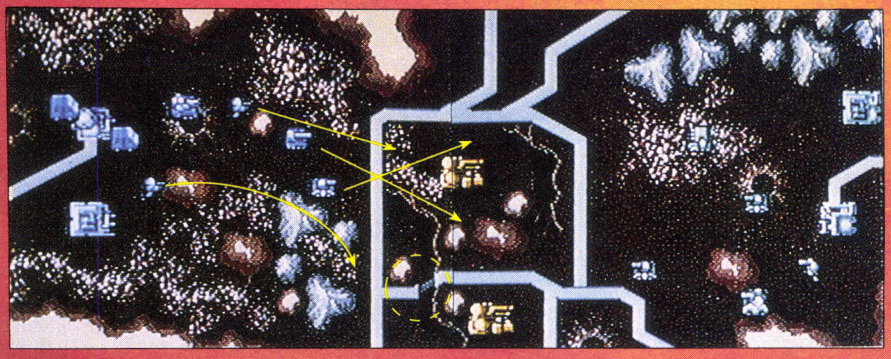






This is an easy level. Move your Eagle just below the enemy Hunter ship, but don't attack. Bring your FX-1 Falcon above the Hunter and attack it. Move your MULEs to the top of the screen and get the base closest to them. Also go for the farthest of the factories. Get the middle factory last.

STAGE 6—SENECA

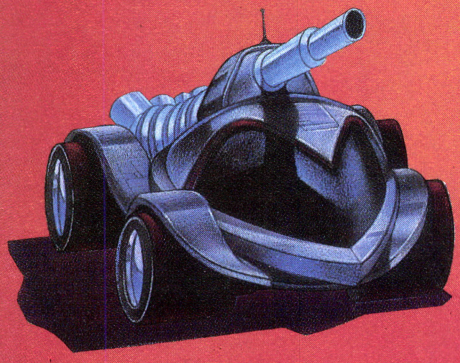




Lay a Trigger on the bridge to keep the enemy out. Place your SG-4 and MR-22 under your factory—most enemy vehicles will be in range. Your MB-4 can also be used as a stationary attack pod.

STAGE 7—SABINE

Try to take both factories, but definitely get the one nearer the top—and remember to protect your troops! The enemy will try and stop them from getting to the factories.

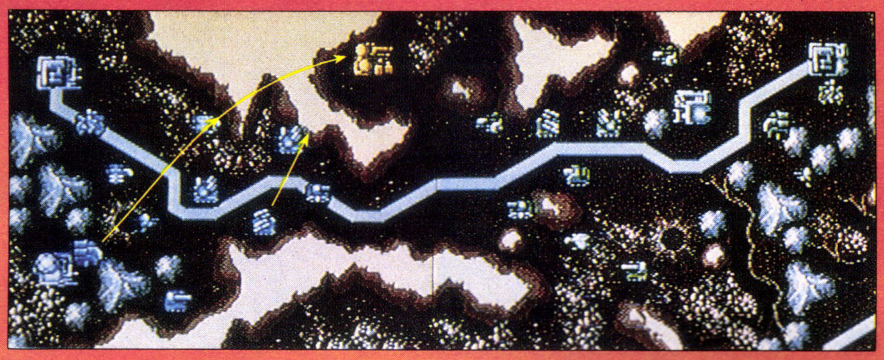




You can take the lower factory from the enemy. Make sure you shell the enemy troops so they can't take it back.

STAGE 8—ARATUS

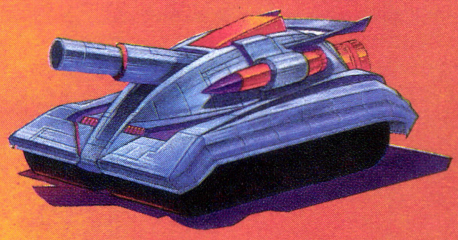
The stages prior to this taught you skills on defense and attack. Use these abilities on this stage, the first major conflict in the game. Concentrate on getting to the neutral factory.

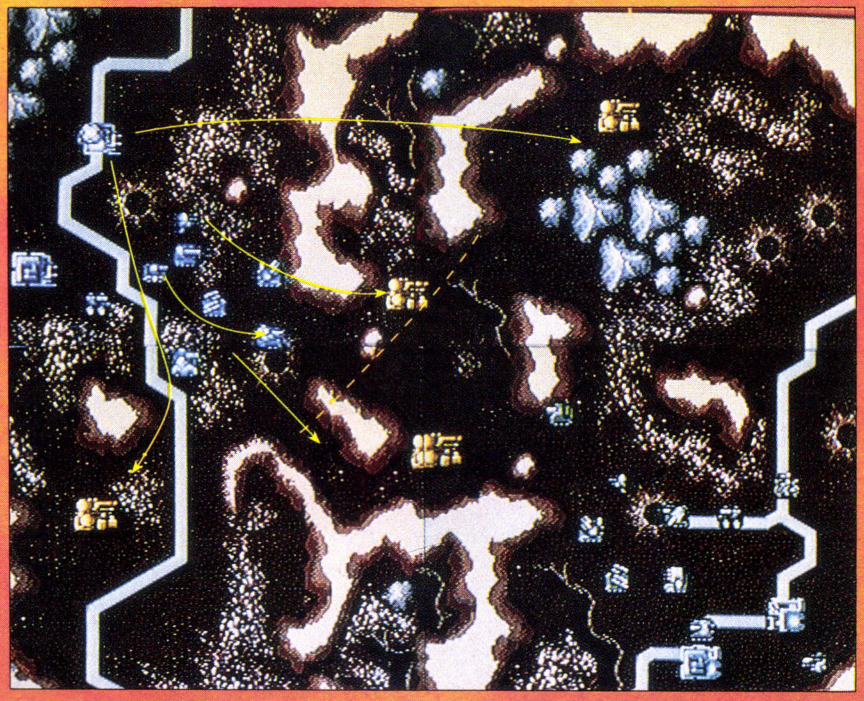






Take out the enemy SS-80 Atlas guns and spacecraft immediately. The neutral factory contains lots of toys.



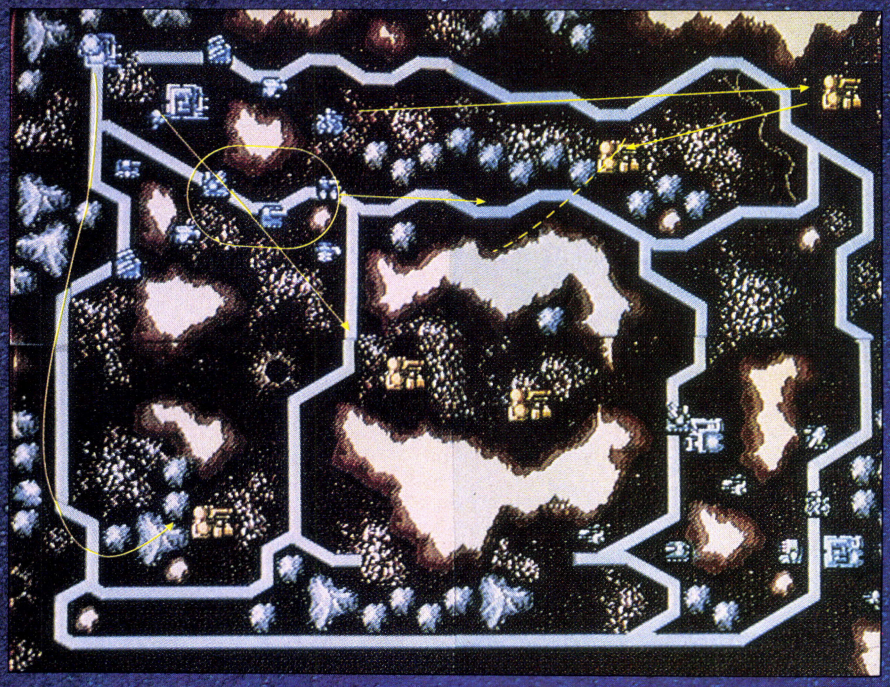


STAGE 9—GALIOS





Get the upper of the two middle factories. Send your Falcon and Eagle to the right of the screen to wipe out the enemy Charlie units. Capture that base when you get the upper neutral factory. The factory on the lower left is easy to get.



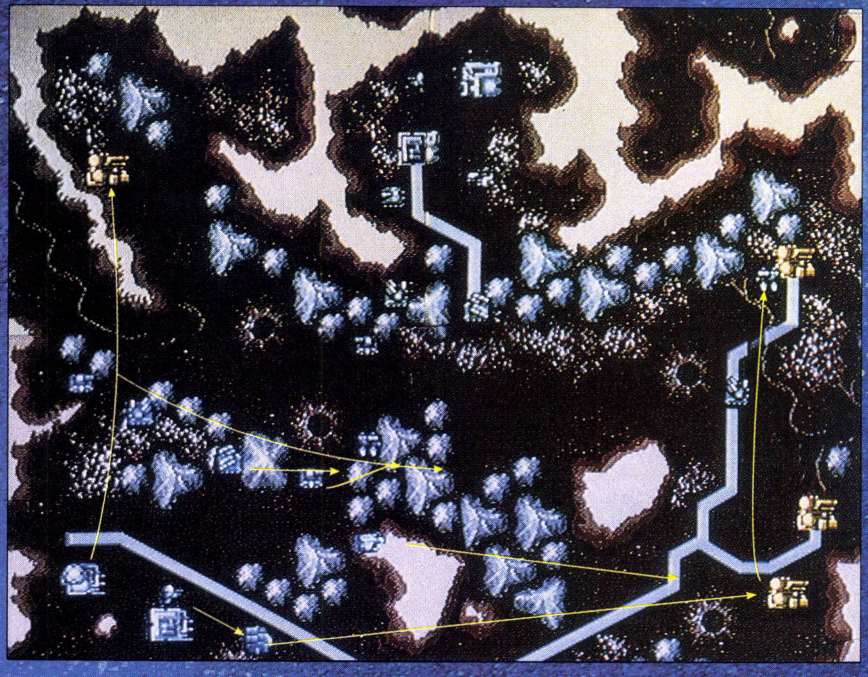
STAGE 10—DARWIN

Bring your moon cycles to the factory on the far right. Get the factory just to its left *after* you capture the right one. Attack the Hunters right away. Capture the lower-left factory using your other moon cycles from your main factory.





Block the enemy cycles using your Eagles so they can't capture that base. Remember, take the factory on the upper right first.



STAGE 11—PASCAL

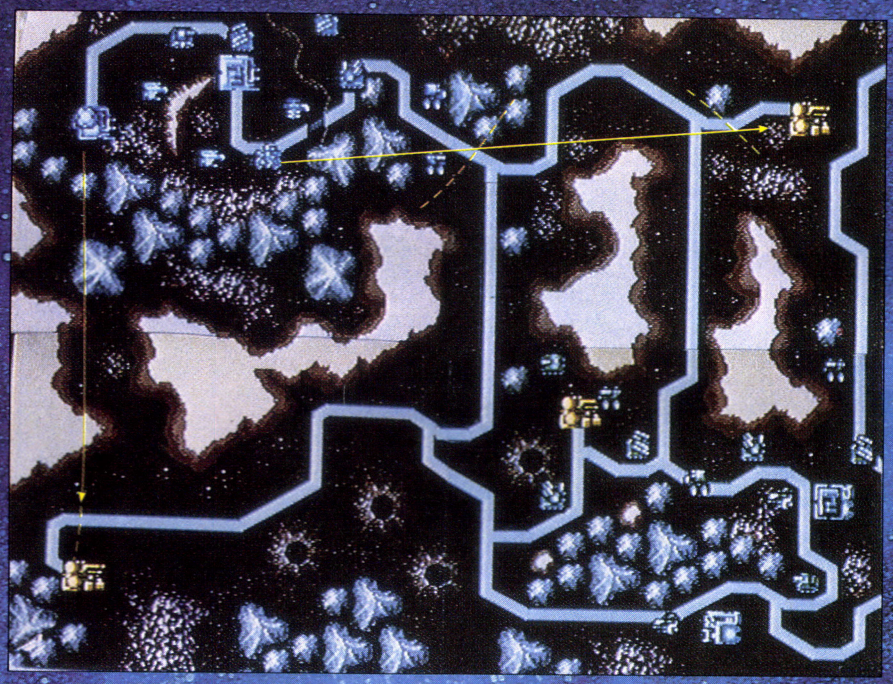
Get your shuttle over to the factories on the lower right, then protect it with your Falcon. The base at the top left is easy to get.







Use your spaceships to block the factory at the upper right until you can bring troops to capture it.



STAGE 12—HALLEY

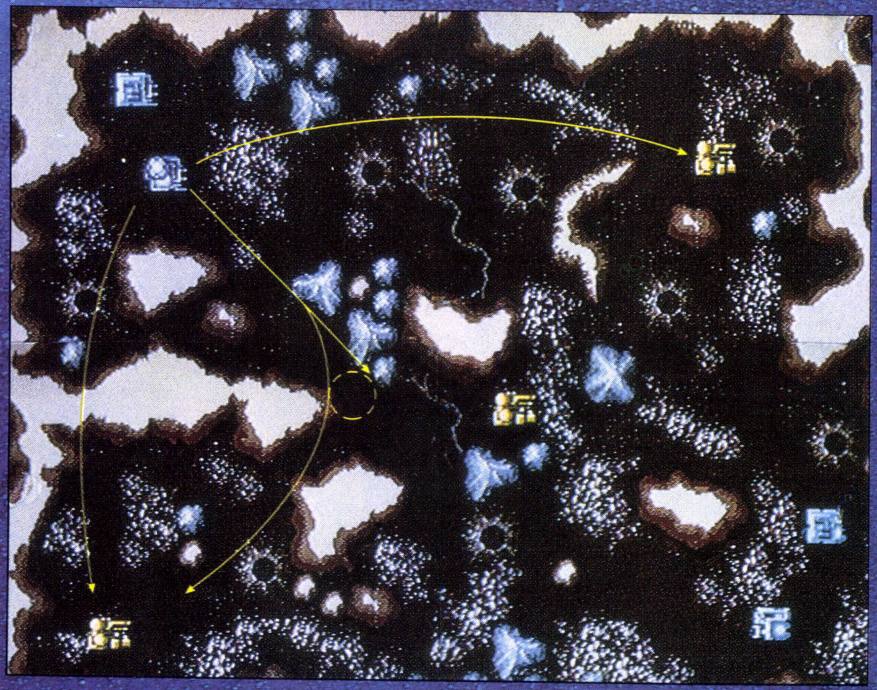
Get your cycles over to the right. Use your shuttle to bring cycles to the lower factory.



Block your ground vehicles with Falcons.



Protect your cycles with spaceships.



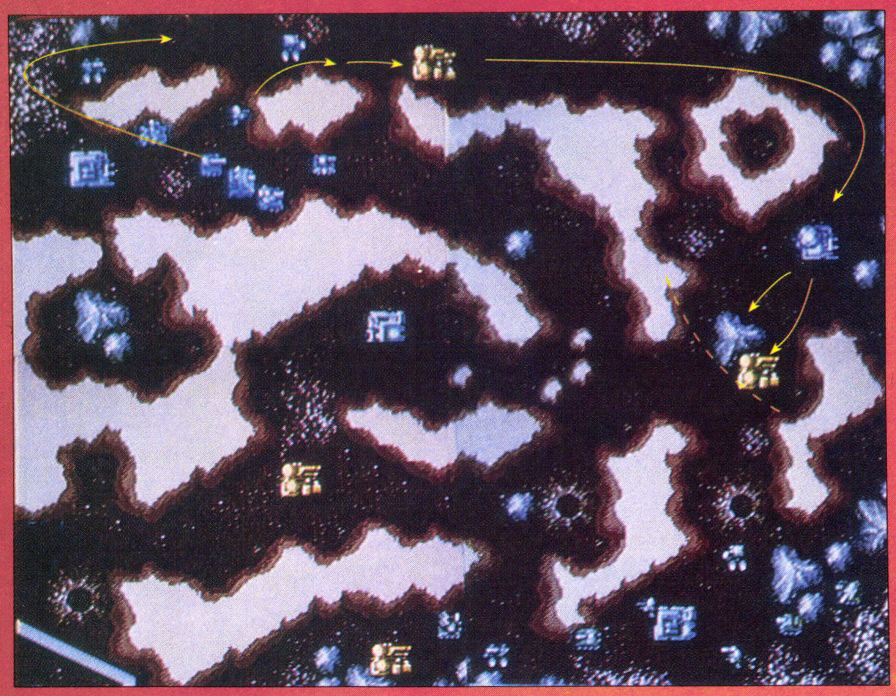
STAGE 13—BORMAN



Lay a Trigger to repel enemy vehicles. Place your SS-80 in attack range of the enemy, but out of reach of their low-range artillery. It may be tough to get your cycles down to the factory in the lower left, so bring a Charlie unit straight in from your main factory.



Here's what works best for me: Bring the MB-4 and a Charlie unit over to the right, then kill the enemy Charlie unit and take that factory.



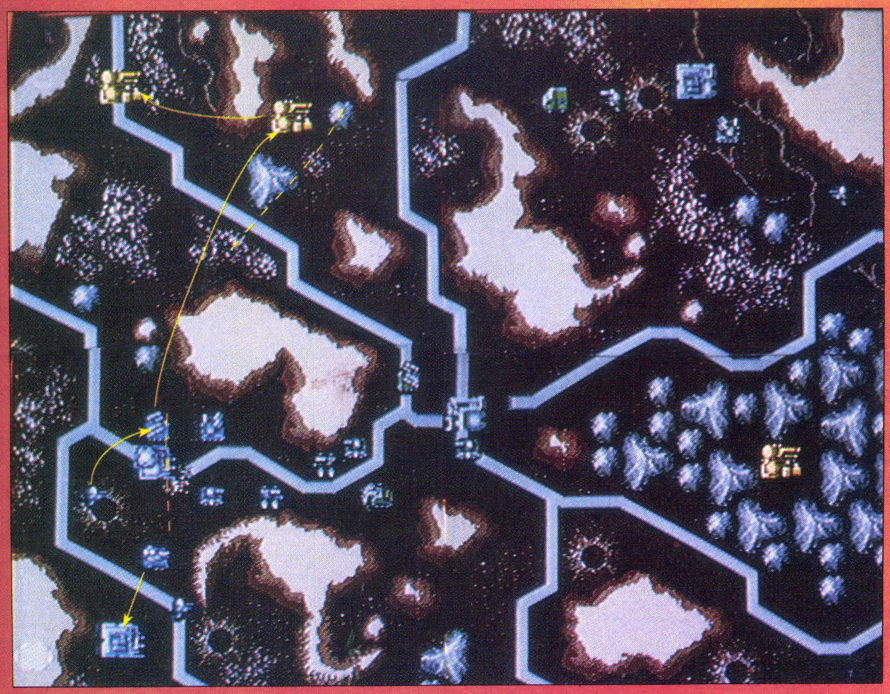
STAGE 14—APOLLO



Cluster around the lower of the two factories. Keep your artillery protected, and take out the Hunter right away.



Bring your MB-4 and tanks around from the upper left. It's important to recycle weapons in the factories to keep your numbers up.



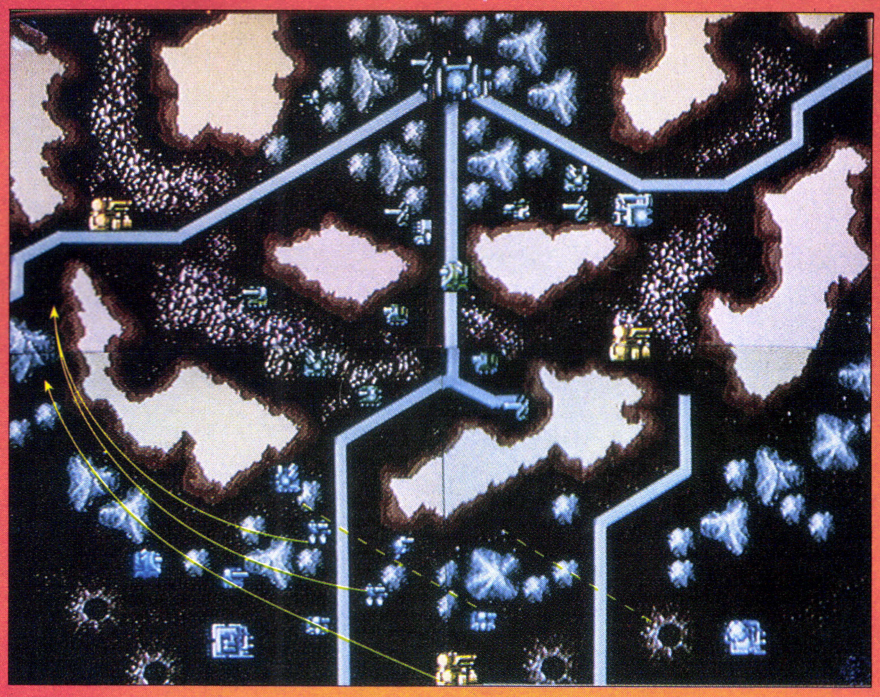
STAGE 15—KAISER



Move up the screen. Load a shuttle and head north.



Capture the base on the right first, then get the one to its left. Don't forget to leave some tanks at your prison to guard it.



STAGE 16—NECTOR



Capture the center factory and destroy the Hunter. The closest of the enemy SS-80 guns should also be destroyed quickly.



Bring your moon buggies and cycles to this factory to capture it.

MILITARY HARDWARE STATS

WEAPON	TRAVEL RANGE	DEFENSE	OFFENSE LAND	OFFENSE AIR	ATTACK RANGE
TANKS					
TT-1 Lenet	5	30	45	0	1/0
S-61 Bison	6	40	50	0	1/0
GS-81 Slagger	7	50	50	0	1/0
GT-86 Titan	5	50	60	0	1/0
T-79 Grizzly	4	50	70	0	1/0
PT-6 Polar	4	60	60	0	1/0
HMB-2 Giant	2	80	90	40	1/1
MOON BUGGIES					
MB-4 Lynx	6	20	40	10	2/1
MB-5 Rabbit	8	20	70	10	1/1
ARTILLERY					
SG-4 Hadrian	4	30	45	0	2-5/0
MR-22 Octopus	4	30	60	0	2-4/0
SS-80 Atlas	0	20	90	0	2-6/0
ANTI-SPACECRAFT					
AAG-4 Seeker	6	30	30	65	1/1
MM107 Hawkeye	5	30	0	85	0/2-5
SPACECRAFT					
FX-1 Falcon	12	30	0	90	0/1
AX-87 Eagle	10	30	70	20	1/1
EF-88 Hunter	11	50	70	70	1/1
TROOPS					
GX-77 Charlie	3	4	10	10	1/1
GX-87 Kilroy	2	10	40	10	1/1
CBX-1 Panther	9	8	10	10	1/1
TRANSPORTATION					
NC-1 MULE	6	10	10	10	1/1
C-61 Pelican	9	10	0	0	0/0
DEFENSE					
M-77 Trigger	0	80	0	0	0/0

REMEMBER: WINNING IS EASY. TRY TO WIN BY OBLITERATING THE ENEMY WITHOUT LOSING ANY OF YOUR OWN GROUPS!

We will provide tips for the second moon and more advanced tips for the first moon in an upcoming issue of TurboPlay, our NEC TurboGrafx-16 magazine.





IN SEARCH OF

THE EVIL PLACE

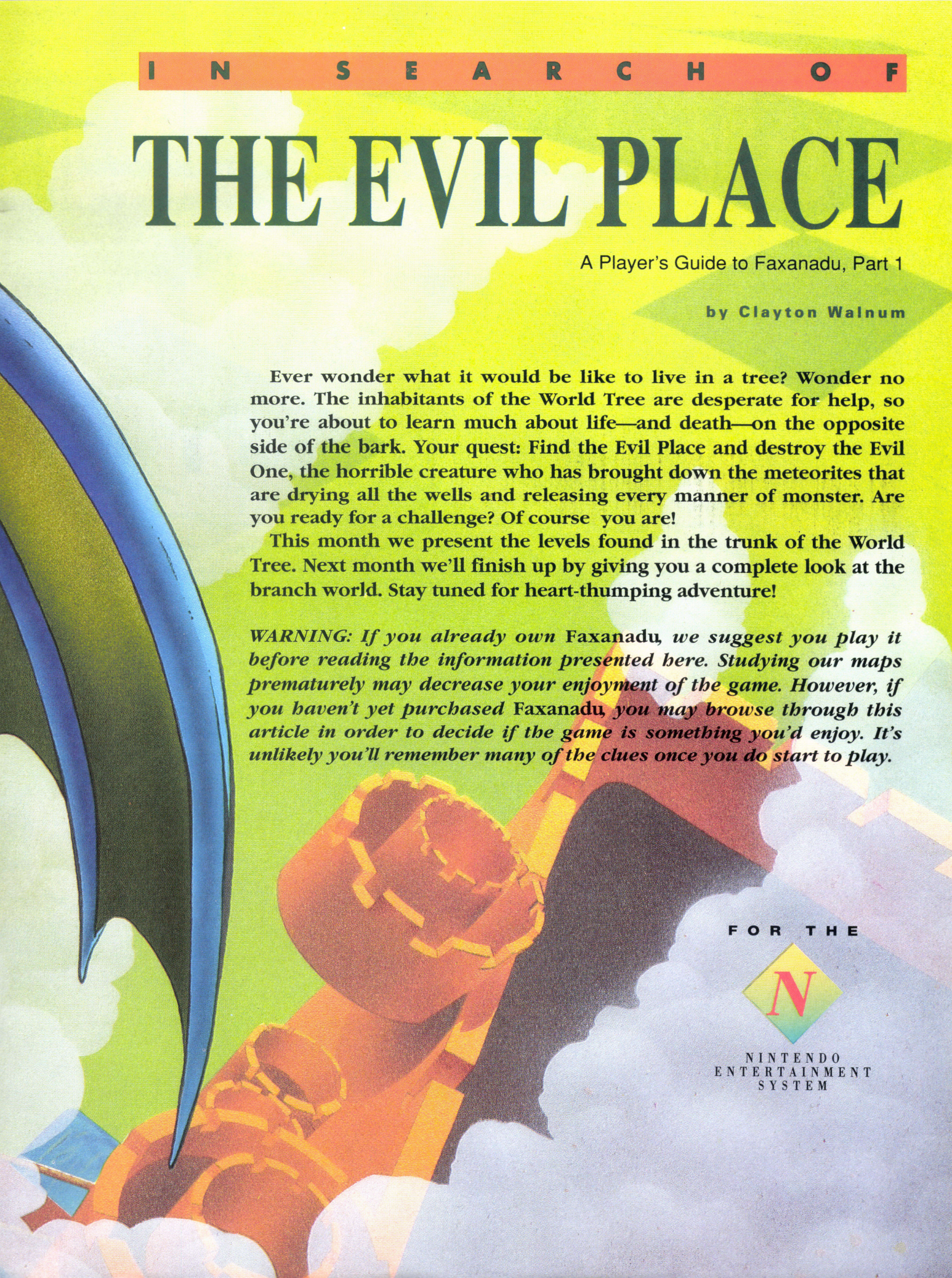
A Player's Guide to Faxanadu, Part 1

by Clayton Walnum

Ever wonder what it would be like to live in a tree? Wonder no more. The inhabitants of the World Tree are desperate for help, so you're about to learn much about life—and death—on the opposite side of the bark. Your quest: Find the Evil Place and destroy the Evil One, the horrible creature who has brought down the meteorites that are drying all the wells and releasing every manner of monster. Are you ready for a challenge? Of course you are!

This month we present the levels found in the trunk of the World Tree. Next month we'll finish up by giving you a complete look at the branch world. Stay tuned for heart-thumping adventure!

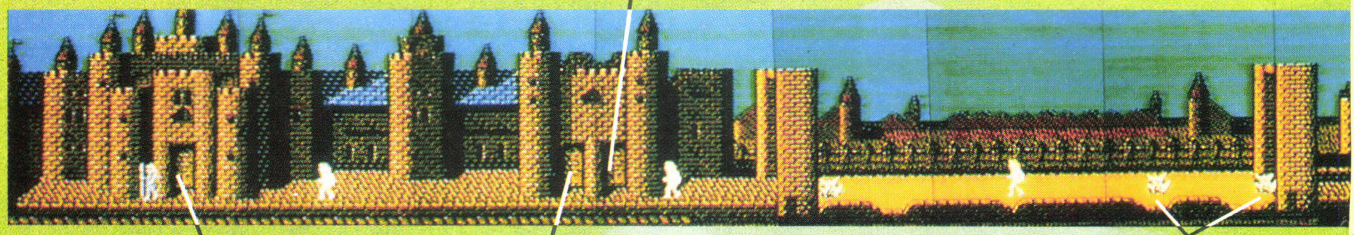
WARNING: If you already own* Faxanadu, *we suggest you play it before reading the information presented here. Studying our maps prematurely may decrease your enjoyment of the game. However, if you haven't yet purchased* Faxanadu, *you may browse through this article in order to decide if the game is something you'd enjoy. It's unlikely you'll remember many of the clues once you do start to play.



FOR THE

NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

STRIP 1: EOLIS



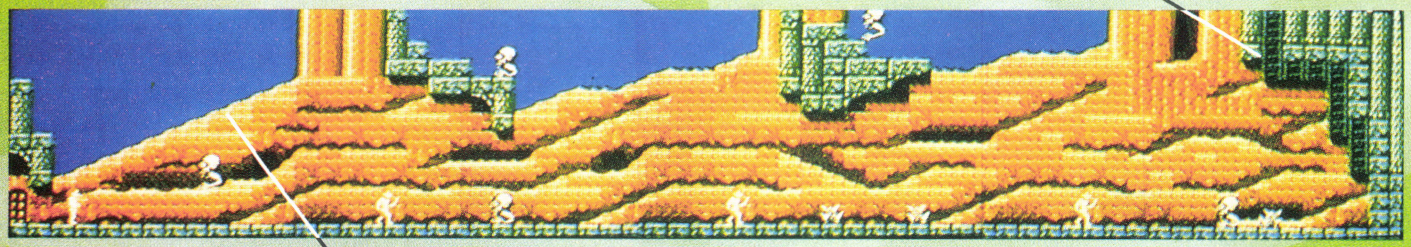
Magic can be had here, for a price.

Visit the king to learn of your quest and to get some gold.

You can get a martial arts lesson here.

Don't try to fight these creatures. Jump over them.

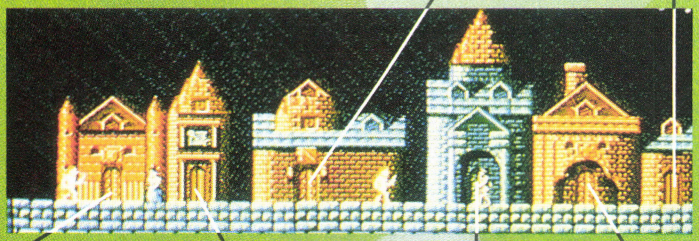
STRIP 2



Take these ladders up to Strip 3.

The monsters in this area are easy to beat, especially if you learn their hopping patterns.

STRIP 4: APOLUNE



The people in this house have much to say.

Get clues in this saloon.

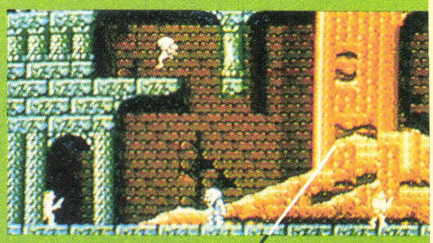
This shop sells small shields, hand daggers, deluge magic and red potions.

This key shop in Apolune sells "J" keys too.

In this hospital you can be completely cured.

The guru here will give you your password, as well as advance your rank when you have enough experience.

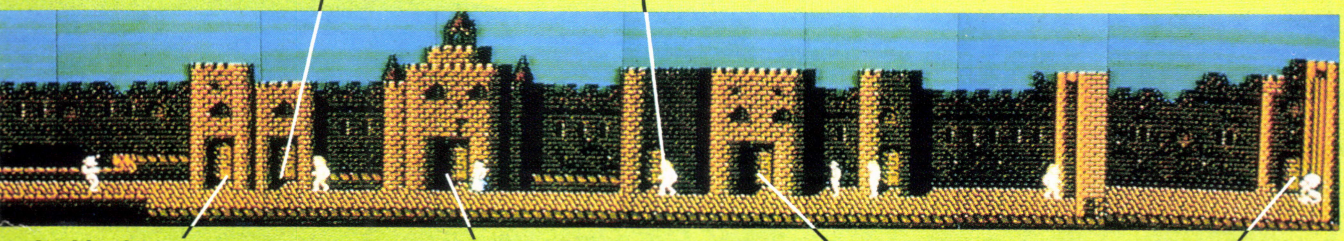
STRIP 5



This area is a good place to practice your fighting skills and earn some gold and experience.

Here's where you can get the "J" key.

Townsfolk here will give you clues.



In this shop you can buy a hand dagger, an elixir, red potion and the deluge spell.

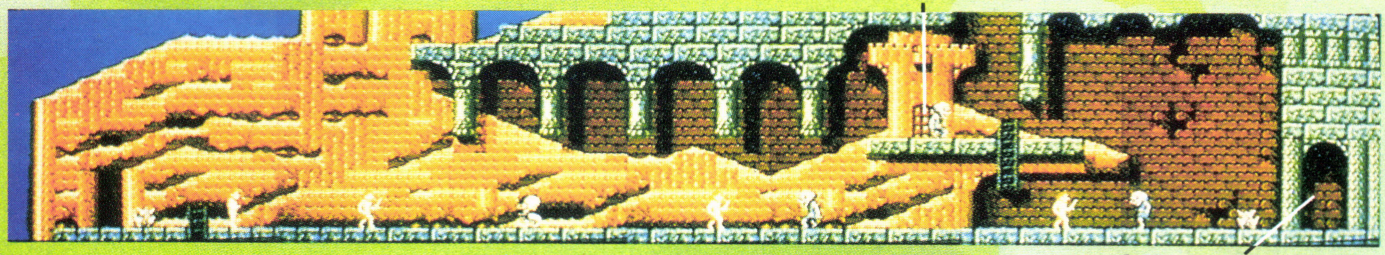
Talk to the Guru here to get an important ring.

This shopkeeper sells dried meat.

Use the "J" key on this door, and you're on your way.

STRIP 3

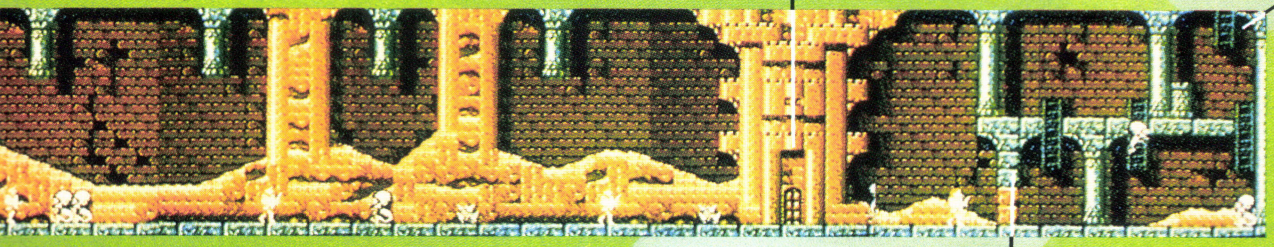
In this shop you can buy two very expensive items: the magic shield and the death spell. Earn a lot of gold first.



Exit here to get to the town of Apolune.

This doorway, opened with a "J" key, leads to Strip 6, where you can get the mattock.

Climb this ladder to Strip 9.

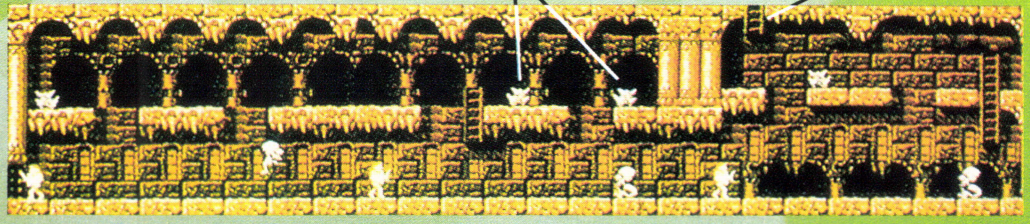


Use the mattock to break these blocks.

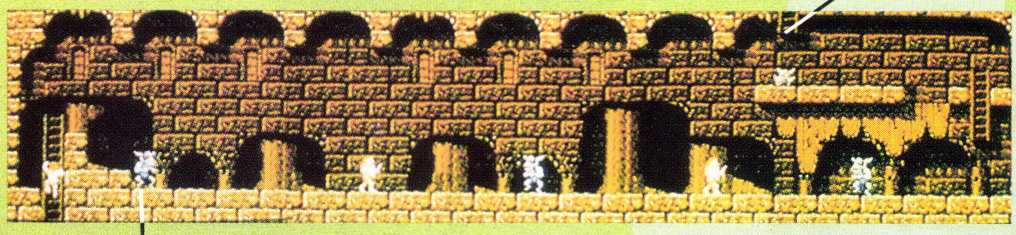
Use magic to get these spiked creatures out of your way. As an added bonus for good fighting, these creatures, when beaten, change into bread that can be eaten to restore your energy.

STRIP 6

Take this ladder to Strip 7.



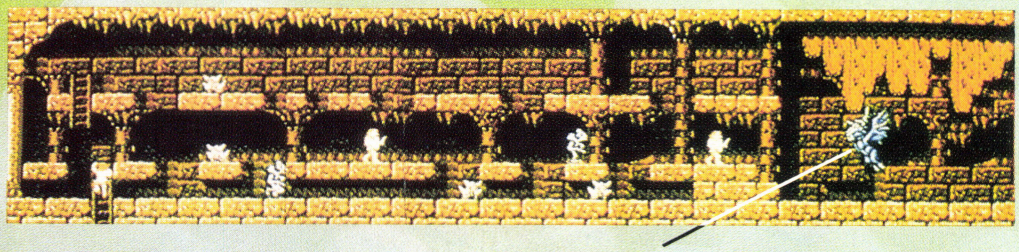
STRIP 7



This ladder leads to Strip 8.

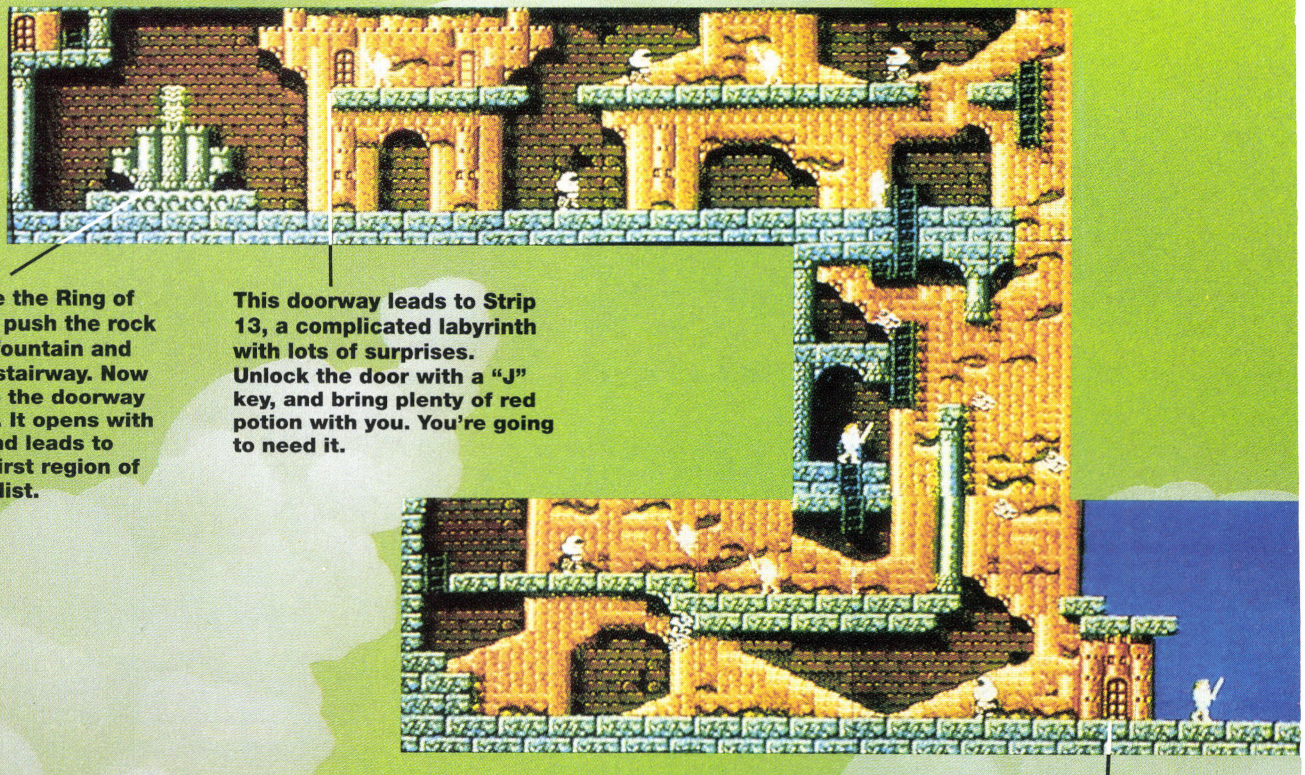
Because of the way they hop over you, it takes some practice to beat these bull beasts.

STRIP 8



To defeat the bat monster, stand on the ledge out of reach of his fire, and hit him continually with your sword, or blast him with magic. It'll take a while to beat him, but when you do, the mattock will be yours.

STRIP 12



Once you have the Ring of Ruby, you can push the rock on top of the fountain and bring down a stairway. Now you can get to the doorway on the far left. It opens with the "Q" key and leads to Strip 15, the first region of the World of Mist.

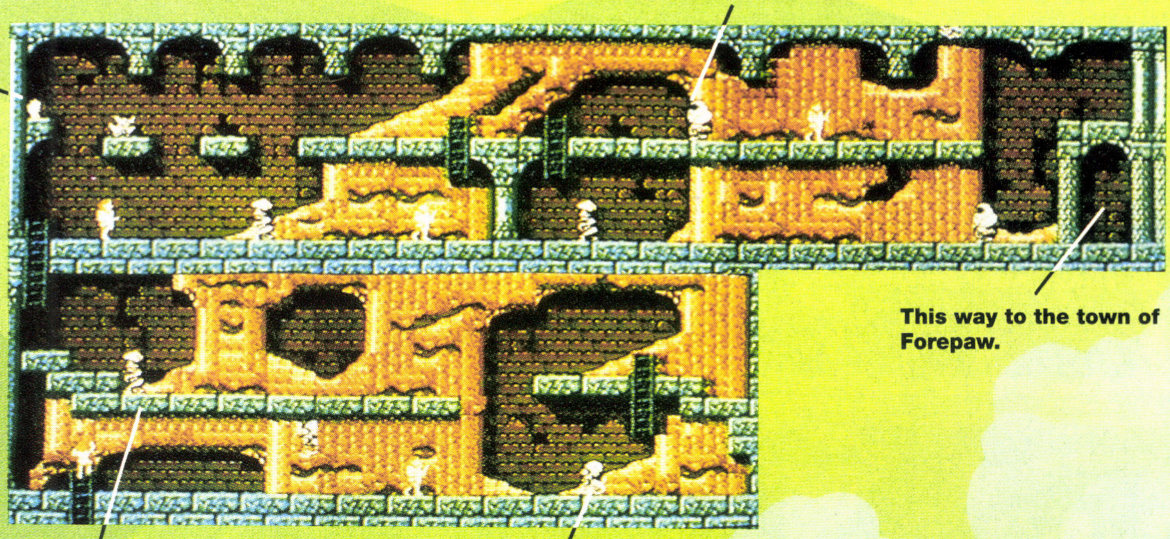
This doorway leads to Strip 13, a complicated labyrinth with lots of surprises. Unlock the door with a "J" key, and bring plenty of red potion with you. You're going to need it.

Beyond this door awaits a fountain and the Ring of Ruby. The door opens with the "JO" key.

STRIP 9/10

The magicians toss balls of energy at you. But you can easily jump over their fire, once you get the timing right.

The glove you'll find here will momentarily increase your attacking power.



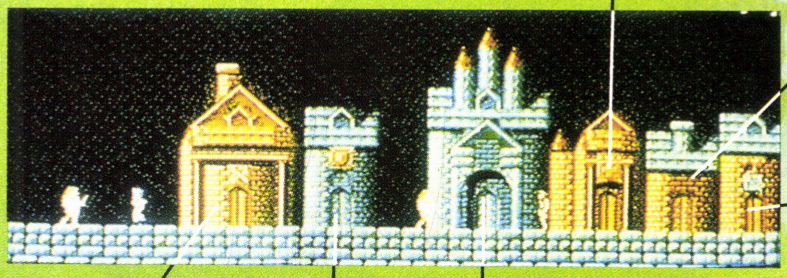
This way to the town of Forepaw.

These enemies also change into bread when they're defeated.

The ghosts fly about in a pattern. Learn the pattern, and then destroy them to get bread.

STRIP 11: FOREPAW

Forepaw's hospital is a good place to return to often.



An important clue is waiting in this house.

This key shop sells "J" and "Q" keys.

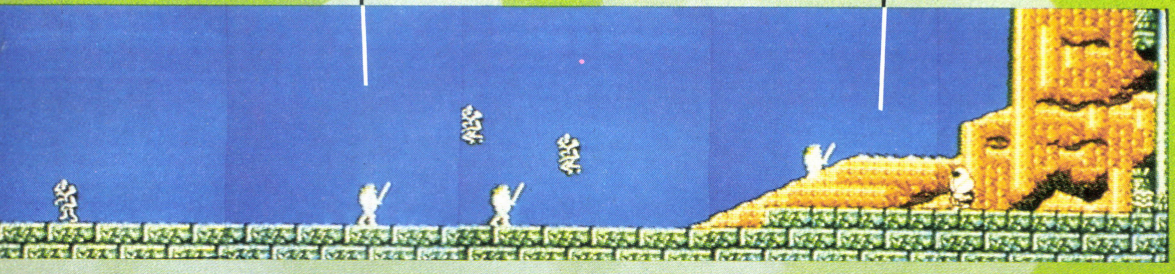
Dried meat is for sale here.

Here's Forepaw's resident guru.

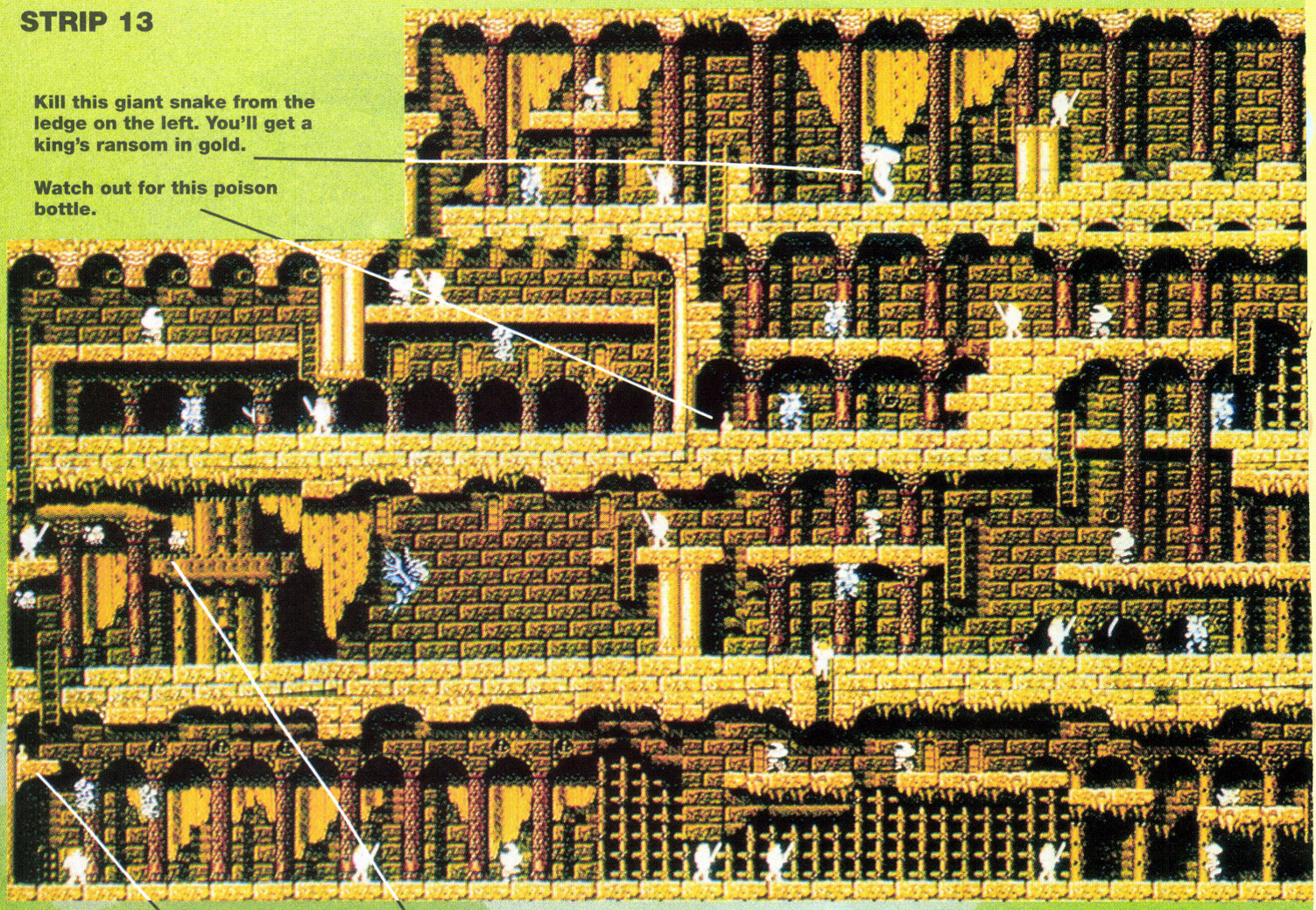
Long swords, studded mail, small shields, red potions and winged boots can be purchased in this shop.

Fly into the sky with the winged boots and discover something important.

This is a dead end. There's nothing here.



STRIP 13



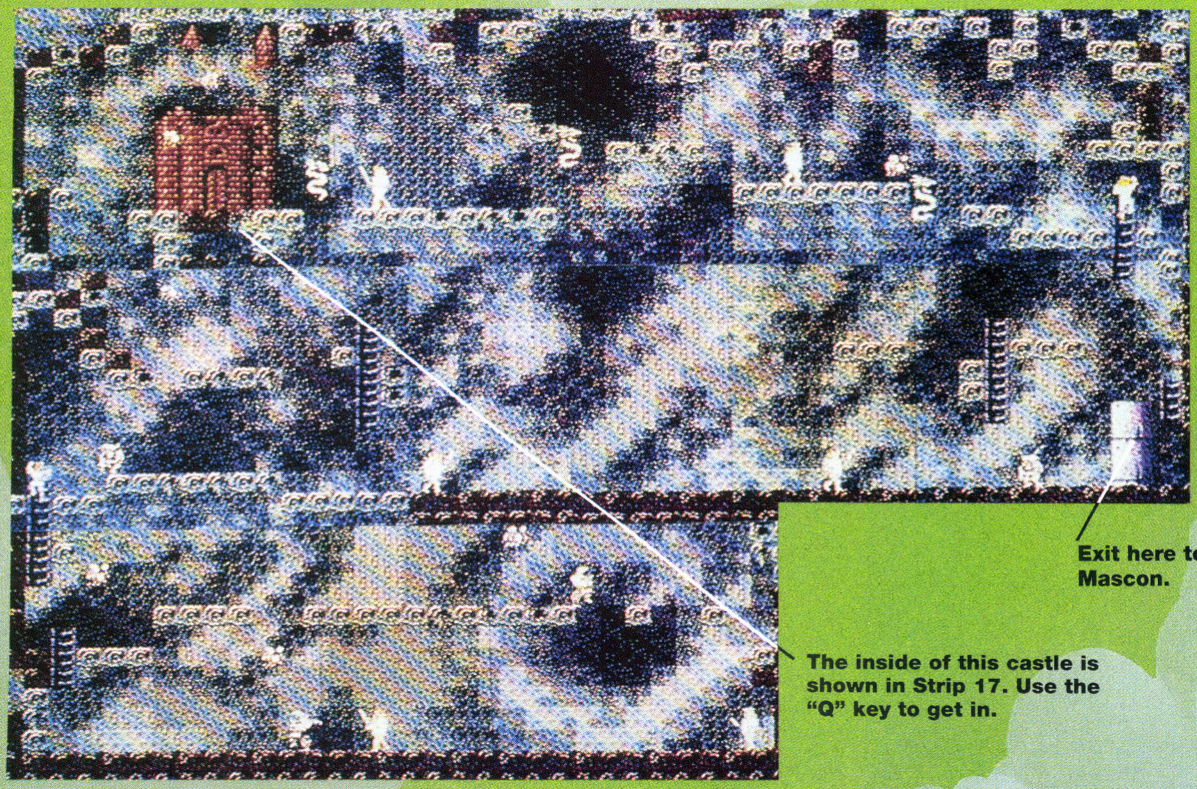
Kill this giant snake from the ledge on the left. You'll get a king's ransom in gold.

Watch out for this poison bottle.

The bottle on this ledge is poison. Don't touch it!

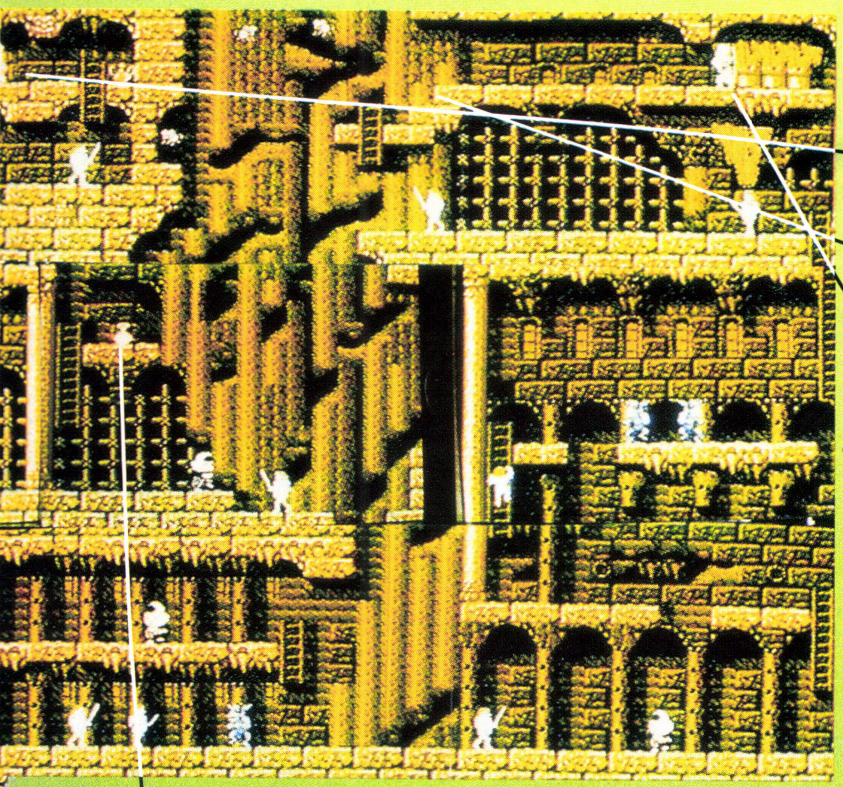
The guru here will give you the all-important "JO" key.

STRIP 15



Exit here to the town of Mascon.

The inside of this castle is shown in Strip 17. Use the "Q" key to get in.



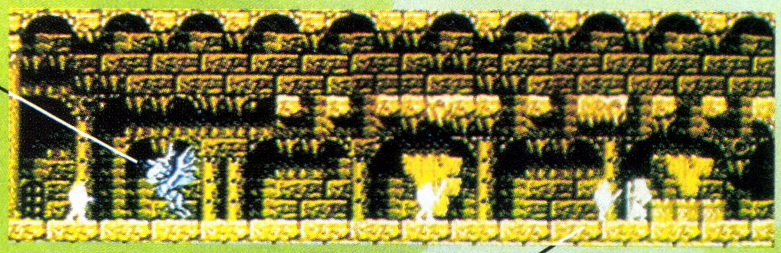
Destroy this creature, and the rocks will stop falling from above. You may also get a free pair of winged boots.

Pick up this elixir, and save it for the old man at the fountain.

Give the old man here the elixir, and he'll be able to get the fountain running again.

This ointment will protect you for a brief time.

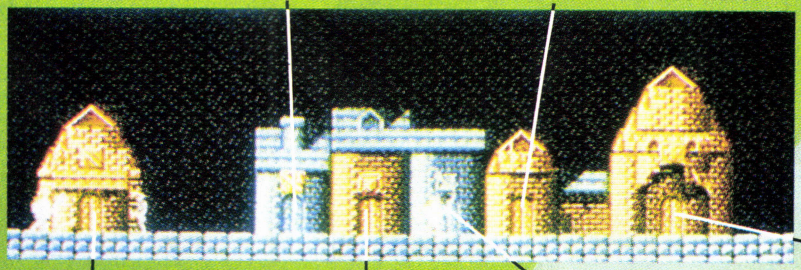
STRIP 14



Defeating this bat creature is a lot tougher than before, since you don't have a ledge to stand on. Blasting him with magic will keep him away from you for a while. Try to run past him, and you'll probably be better off.

Talk to this old man twice. The first time he'll restart the fountain. The second time he'll give you the Ring of Ruby, with which you can push away the rock on top of the main fountain.

STRIP 16: MASCON



Dried meat for sale here.

Get more clues here.

Here's the hospital.

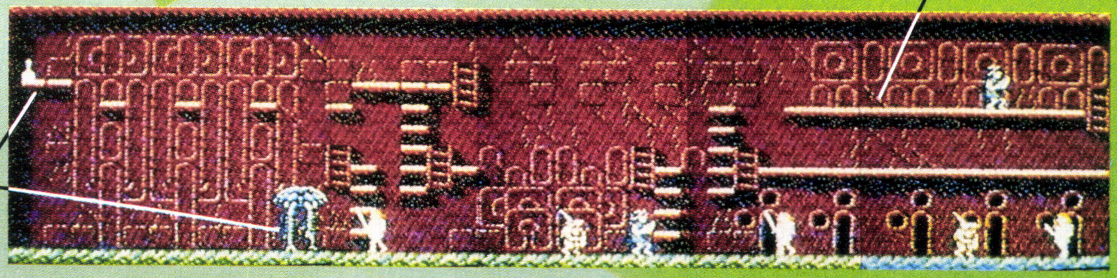
Get some clues in this house.

This tool shop sells large shields, mattocks, red potions and the thunder spell.

Buy the "J" and "Q" keys in this key shop.

STRIP 17

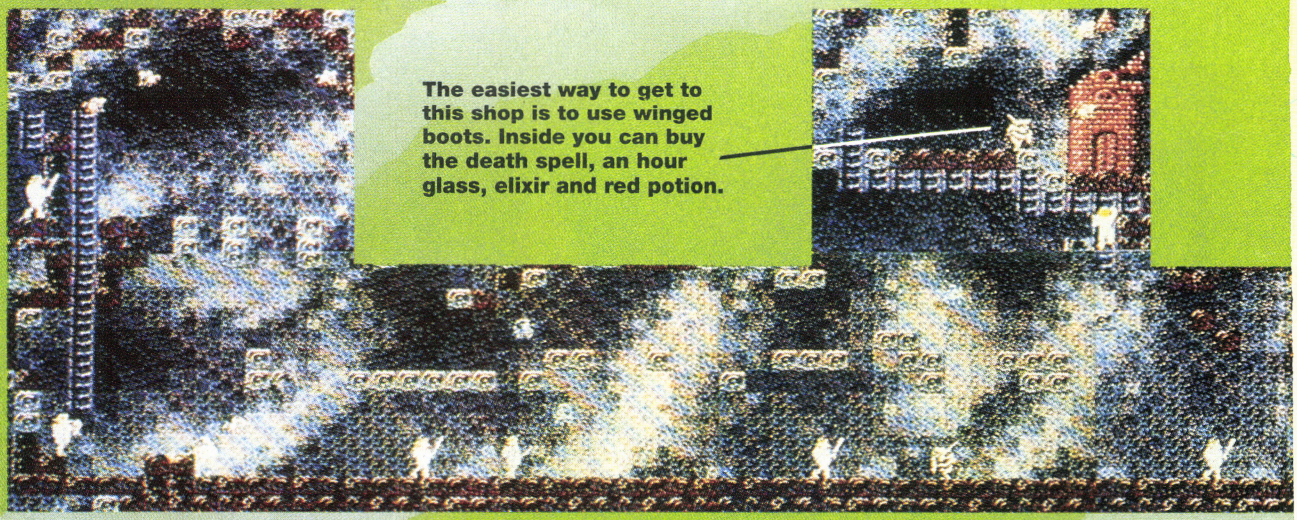
The wizards in this castle cast spells that cause serious damage. And they don't have to be anywhere near you.



These octopus-type machines are easy to beat. Keep hitting them in the head.

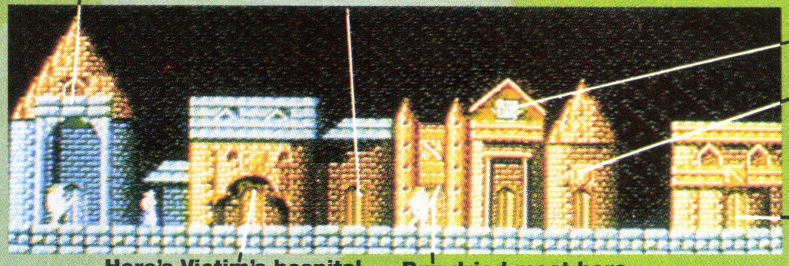
All this trouble for only a red potion? Yep!

STRIP 18



The easiest way to get to this shop is to use winged boots. Inside you can buy the death spell, an hour glass, elixir and red potion.

STRIP 21: VICTIM



Visit the guru here.

In this house, you'll be given clues.

The key shop sells "K" and "Q" keys.

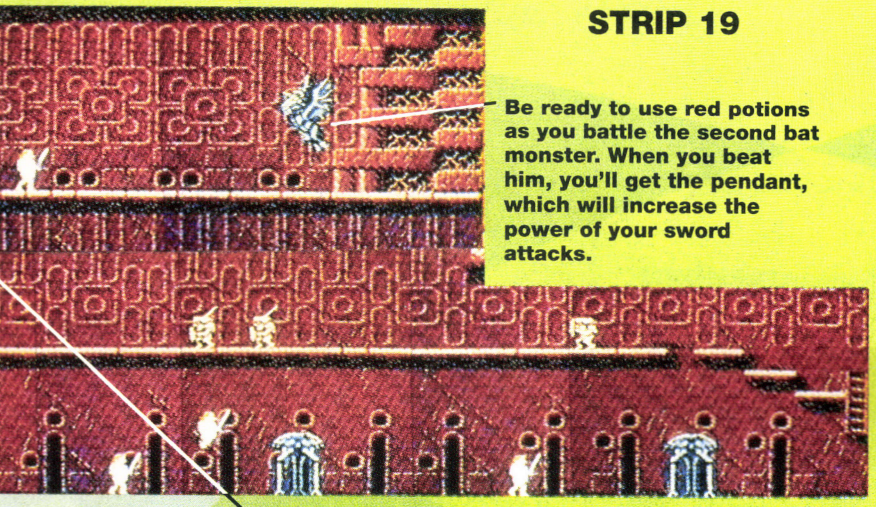
This tool shop sells full-plate armor, mattocks and red potion.

Here's a tavern where you can collect more clues.

Here's Victim's hospital.

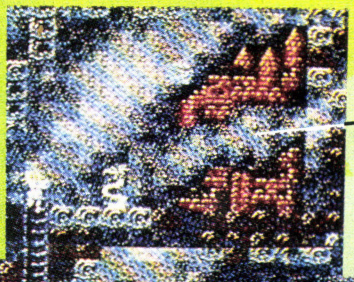
Buy dried meat here.

STRIP 19



Be ready to use red potions as you battle the second bat monster. When you beat him, you'll get the pendant, which will increase the power of your sword attacks.

Don't bother trying to beat this bat monster. Run past him, and save your strength for the second bat monster.

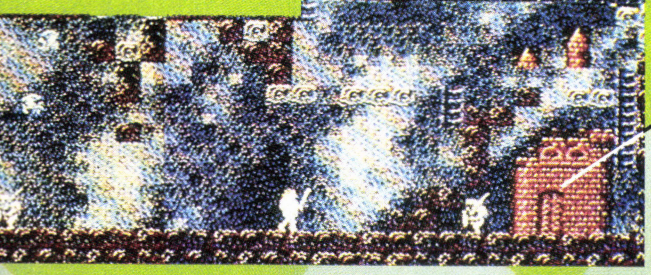


To get into this castle, use the "Q" key.

You'll need winged boots to reach this ladder, which will take you to Strip 20.



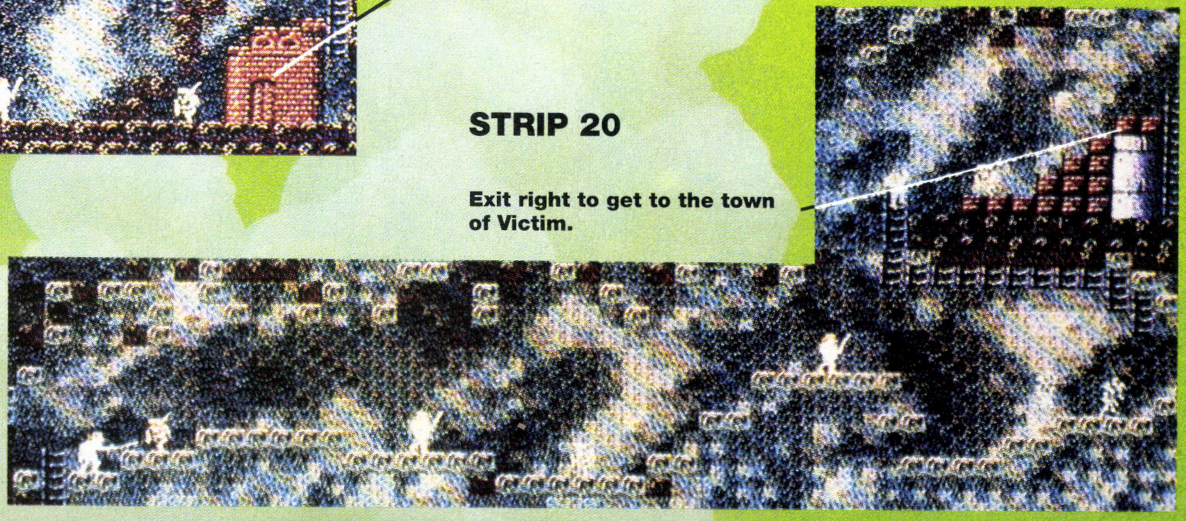
You'll find a guru behind the middle doors. The other two rooms contain nothing but trouble.



Get some clues here.

STRIP 20

Exit right to get to the town of Victim.



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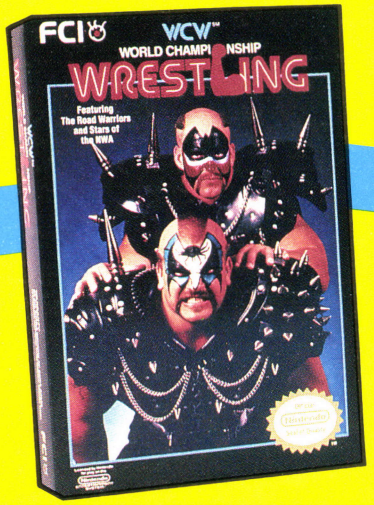
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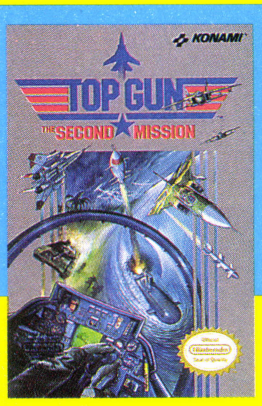
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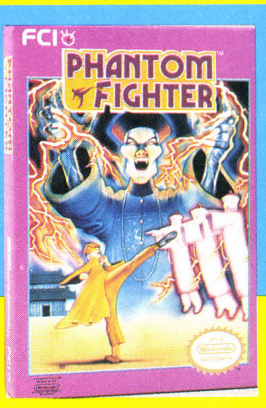
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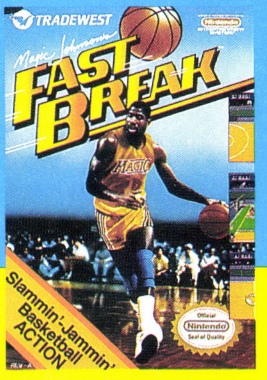
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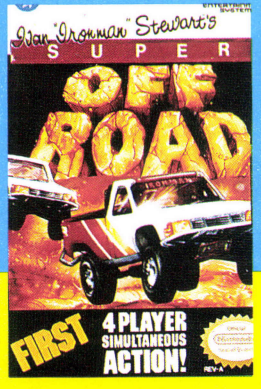
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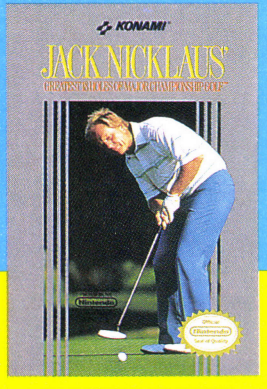
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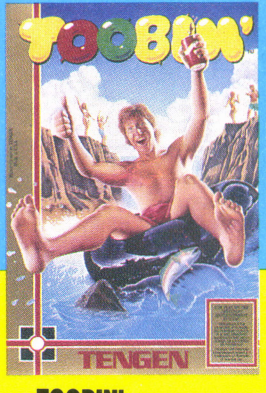
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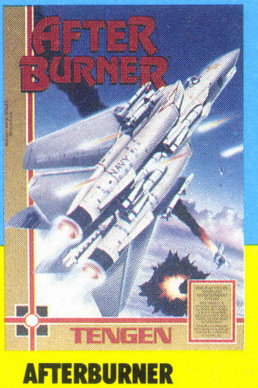
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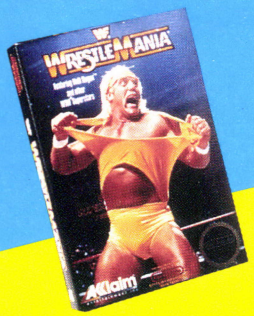
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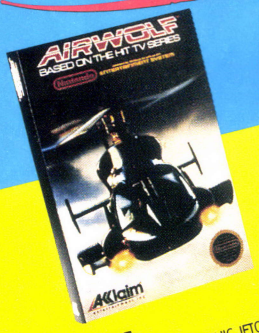
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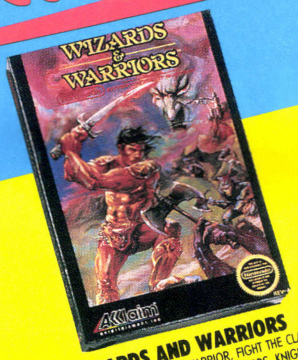
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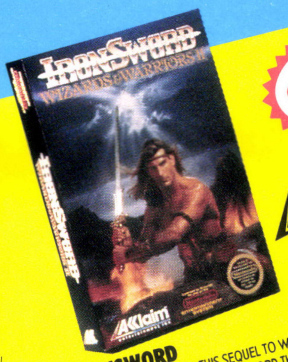
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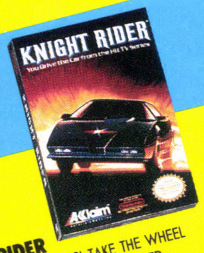


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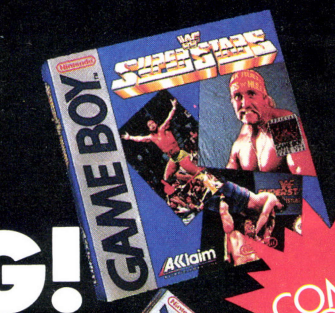
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KWIRK™

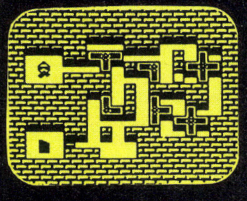
HE'S A-MAZE-ING!



COMING SOON!

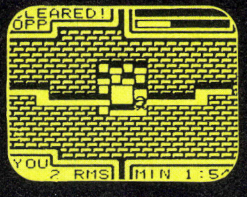


Kwirk's in a bit of a stew. His main squeeze, Tammy, has been trapped, and Kwirk's the only truckin' Tomato with a chance to rescue her. With Kwirk, you'll move bunches of blockers, outwit plenty of pits, and mash through many a maze.



And just when one labyrinth seems to be licked...an even trickier one appears.

So put on your shades, get your thinker in gear and join the a-maze-ing Kwirk in his quest to solve this puzzling predicament.



And remember, Tammy's only got one hope...you!

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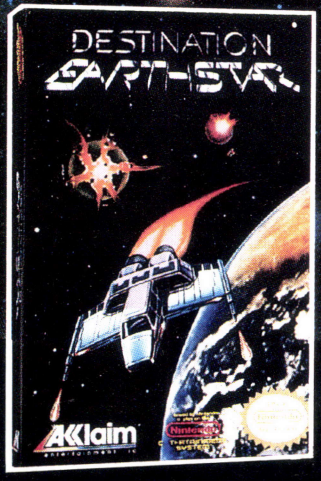


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Tips are graded on a scale of one to five joysticks. The more joysticks shown, the more valuable the hint!

Have you ever found something neat in a video game? We're looking for those hidden gems that developers put in their cartridges. If you've found continues, special modes or sound tests that you want to pass along, send them to VG&CE, 9171 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 300, Beverly Hills, CA 90210, ATTN: *Easter Egg Hunt*. The author of each new tip we use will receive $10. Write neatly, and be sure to include your name and address!

Here's a key to the abbreviations:

U = Up
D = Down
L = Left
R = Right
A = "A" button
B = "B" button
C = "C" button



Vigilante

(NEC for the TurboGrafx-16)
3 joysticks

If you want to max out your point total, here's a simple trick to do it, and it works on any level. When you find a set of nunchaku, pick them up and crouch down. With autofire on for efficiency, chop away at all attackers; in fact, if you can, find a good spot where lots of bad guys come at you from one direction. As long as you stay crouched, you can ignore the timer and build up your score. As soon as you get up, you'll lose a life.



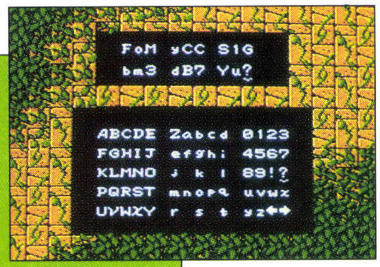
Willow

(Capcom for the NES) 2 Joysticks

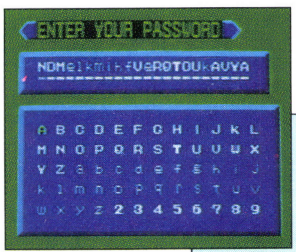
If you enter the following code, you'll find yourself with almost all the items available in the game.

FoM yCC S1G
bm3 dB7 Yu?

You'll still have to fight valiantly to complete the game, but the password will help.







Tommy Lasorda Baseball

(Sega for the Genesis) 2 joysticks

This code will take you to the World Series with Toronto battling Oakland:

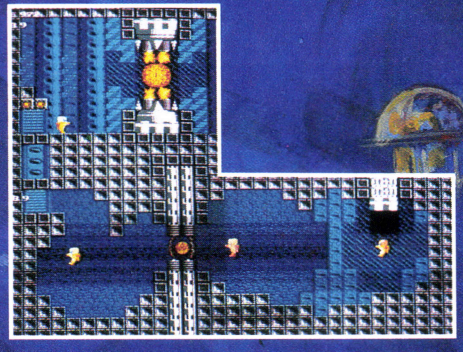
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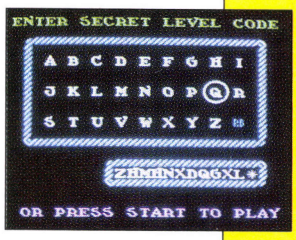
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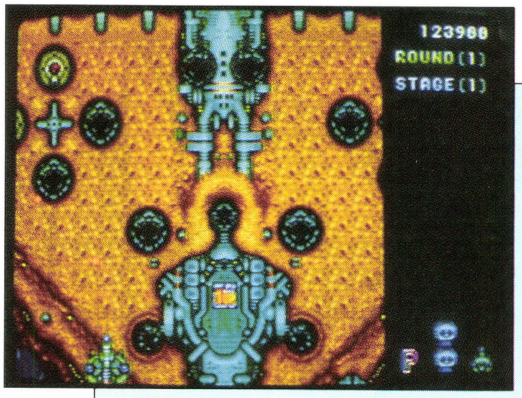
Ironsword

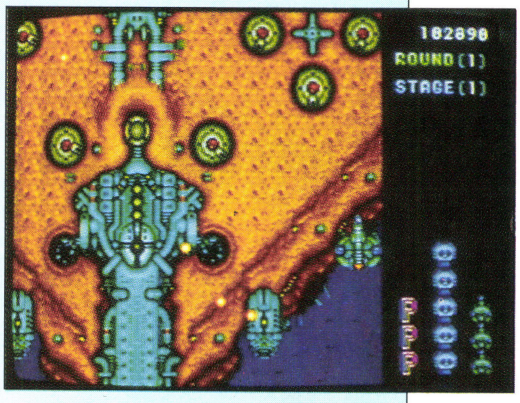
(Acclaim for the NES)
2 joysticks





If you're having trouble getting Kuros through this tough contest, try this. Input your password as you normally would, but place an "N" in the fifth position. This new code will automatically give you three lives to start the game with! Experiment with other letters for different results.

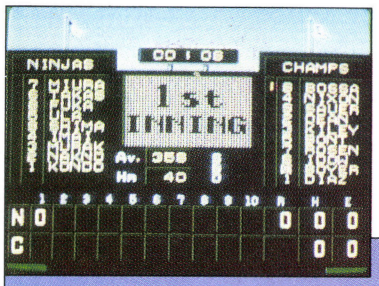




Truxton

(Sega for the Genesis)
3 joysticks

Have you ever wondered what the series of colored dots in some levels are there for? Well, if you come upon them-the green lights in Round 1-1, for example-make sure you blast away at them with the same colored weapon. After a little bit of shooting, you'll uncover a 1-Up! The same process works for the red lights on Round 1-2 and the blue lights on Round 1-5.

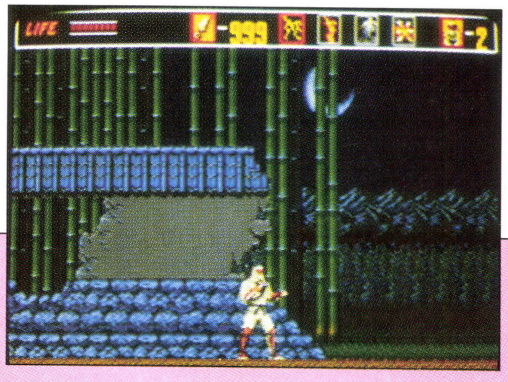


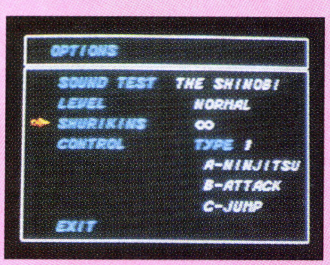


World Class Baseball

(NEC for the TurboGrafx-16) 2 joysticks

When you enter the pennant mode, put your icon on the Ninjas and enter 604A as a code. You'll end up in a game against the Turbo-champs. Good luck!





Revenge of Shinobi

(Sega for the Genesis) 5 joysticks

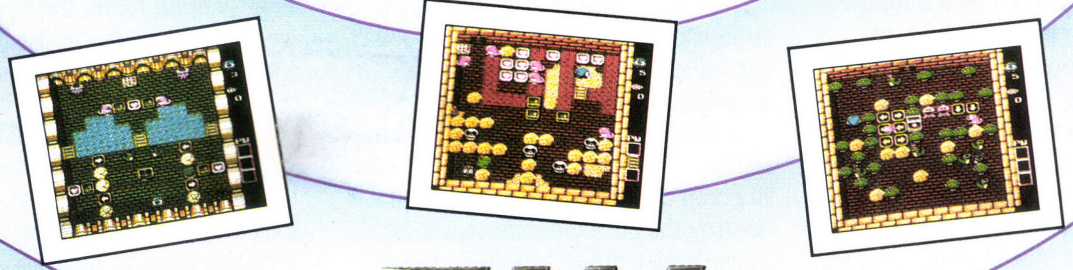
If you're having a tough time keeping enough shurikins in your inventory, struggle no more. Georgie Berrios of San Juan, Puerto Rico, has discovered a way to get unlimited shurikins. If you go to the options screen and put a zero in the shurikins column, then wait 15 seconds or so, the zero will turn to an infinity ( ) symbol. During play, your on-screen shurikin count will remain 999. Great tip, Georgie!

LOLO 2



He's Back and Ready for Action!

Our hero Lolo has charmed, enchanted, and confounded puzzle-loving game players around the world with his unfailing courage and plucky persistence–and now he's off for his second quest! Join forces with Lolo and his faithful sidekick Lala for another journey full of puzzles and pitfalls. Praised by players, critics and educators alike, the Lolo series teaches logical thinking and patience without sacrificing the fun! Improved graphics, increased difficulty, and new tricks and techniques will keep you guessing through every fun-filled moment. A game for mental giants of all ages. *Available March, 1990.*



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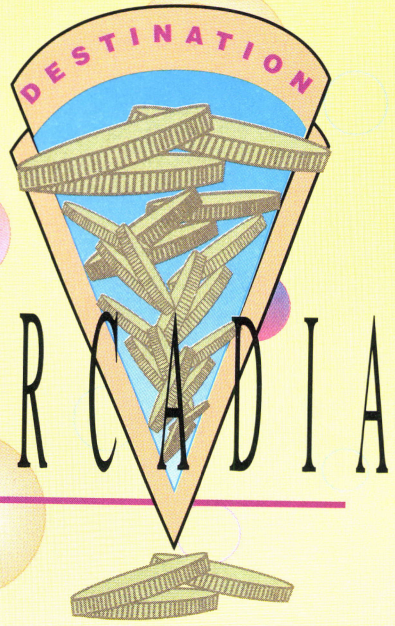
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CIRCLE #126 ON READER SERVICE CARD.



BUSTER BROS.

by Donn Nauert

Every now and then a video game comes along that is so unique it's hard to place in any one category. A video game that is so simple to understand yet difficult enough to play that it gives even hard-core gamers a run for their money. Well *Buster Bros.*, by Capcom USA, is just such a game.

Even the plot of the game is unusual because there are no dark forces threatening the world or princesses in need of rescue, only bouncing balls and an occasional bird flying through to get in your way. Armed with a single-shot harpoon (though that can be changed, as I'll explain in a minute), you—with or without a friend helping cooperatively—travel to some of the most exotic locations on Earth (such as the Taj Mahal, Athens and Easter island) on a safari of sorts.

Bubbles on the Loose!

Even odder is that your prey in this action-strategy game are giant multicolored bubbles that fall from above as if someone dropped a box of Mr. Bubble in a rainstorm. The difference is that these suds are out to knock you around for a while. With the help of your harpoon, you need to spear the spheres from underneath to survive. Before you take aim, though, carefully check out your surroundings, because every stage has its own configuration of ledges, walls and ladders. These obstacles serve to deflect the globes in different directions, which makes lining up a bull's-eye shot more difficult. To make it even harder, each hit on a bubble splits it into two smaller—and, of course, faster moving—pieces, much like in *Asteroids*, further clogging up the area you have to move around in. It's important to recognize trouble spots before you get trapped, because you can guess what happens when you get hit by one of these frantic spheres. Yep, that's right, you lose a life.

To make matters worse, there are a whole bevy of pesky creatures (owls, woodpeckers, hawks and purple crabs) that love to cause problems by causing the balls to deviate from their course or breaking up bubbles when you're not ready to handle them. And if you happen to run into one of these little beasties, it'll stun you so that you can move but can't fire. At that point you'll have to rely on your ability to play a furiously defensive game of dodgeball for a short time rather than target shooting.

Luckily, you do have one ally in the game. That friend is a red crab. When the crab comes onto the screen he will destroy the balls with his claws. He doesn't stick around for long, so you want to take advantage of his services. It's also hard not to hit him with a shot occasionally, and he isn't invincible, so be careful or you'll lose a good buddy. Along with the single harpoon, there's a variety of special items and weapons that you can retrieve on each stage. These bonuses include a clock, hourglass, dynamite, protective force field and a 1-Up. The main source for these objects are the balls themselves. Many of the globes contain a supplementary item, indicated by a symbolic icon, that will float straight down until it hits a ledge or floor. To retrieve one of these aids, simply move your character in contact with the icon to bring it to your side.

Another source of these treasures are the breakable ledges that can be found in various stages. Usually you'll have to shoot all the ledges in the particular stage for the item to appear, but it's well worth your time and effort to find one of the elusive 1-Ups. Once an item appears, you'll have a couple of seconds to get to it before it disappears from the screen. Another reason for picking up a bonus, aside from their special characteristics, is the valuable points they're worth.

Of the various bonus items available, dynamite is the only item you'll want to use caution with, because it causes all balls on-screen to explode into their smallest possible form. Having this happen at the beginning of a stage is life-threatening.

The bright yellow clock will freeze all the action on the screen for a few seconds, which is helpful when there are a lot of small balls bouncing around the screen. The hourglass is also a good item, because it slows the balls down to a more manageable pace.

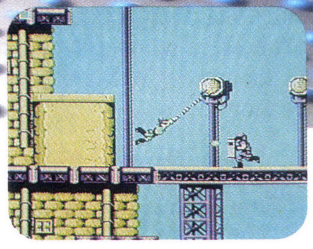
The force field is a "must get" item. By allowing you to receive one lethal blow without harm, the force field will let you set up a better position when things start to get hectic.

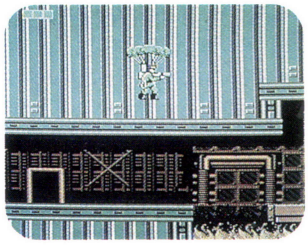
Choose Your Weapon

You also have three weapons that will increase your chances of success: a twin harpoon, a grappling hook and a high-caliber gun. All three are good weapons, but each one also has a weak point. As in real life, the harpoon and hook have cords attached to them. As an added benefit, it's the cord that will save you in most cases, because it blocks the balls as much as the weapon you are throwing. So it would be to

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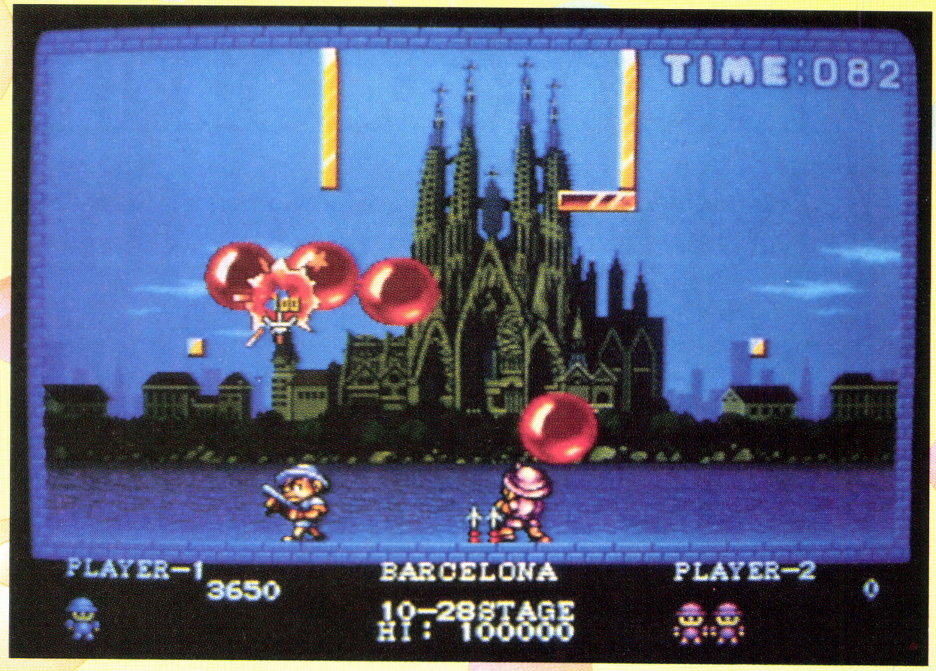
your benefit to lead the balls as much as possible.

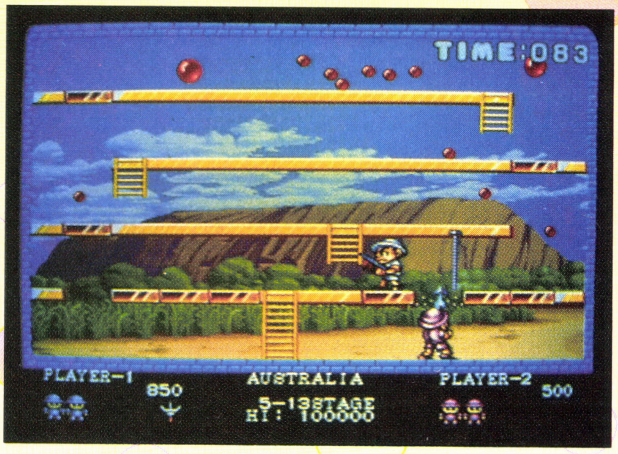
The twin harpoon allows you to shoot at a quicker rate of speed, but it's best suited for stages that have a lot of open space. The weapon "resets" when it contacts an object, so on stages that contain low ledges, having this weapon could work against you and cause you to lose a life.

The grappling hook is just the opposite. It's great for stages that have tight places, because it will stick to the ledge or roof—for a limited time or until a ball hits it—and create a protective wall for you to hide behind. The hook's biggest drawback is that you can only shoot one at a time. This can leave you in a panic, especially when you have a horde of small bulletlike balls intently bearing down on you.

Unfortunately, the last weapon, the high-caliber gun, is not that effective in most areas. Although it does shoot two bullets in a V-shape, you'll find that you have to be directly under a ball to hit it. The best aspect of this weapon is its quickness. Because of this factor, you may want to pick up the weapon early in a stage, so you can break up the larger globes quickly.

(*Strategy Tip:* Before playing this game for the first time, you should watch the demo screen carefully. It will present some great examples of all the abilities of the special items and weapons.)





It's Cheaper Than Flying

After blasting the menacing balls, you should take a look at the background. Although each stage has a still "picture" of the surroundings—*Buster Bros.* has 50 stages taking place in 17 different locations. These images are truly spectacular. Starting at Mt. Fuji, you'll pass Mt. Keirin then go on to the Emerald Temple. Other sites include the pyramids of Egypt and the frozen structures of Leningrad. When you hit this latter section, you'll encounter ice, which makes precise maneuvering of your on-screen hunter difficult.

Buster Bros. is a one- or two-player simultaneous game. Not only can you continue at the last stage you died on, but a second player can join in at any time. The game also features a stage select, which allows you to choose any stage from 1 to 28 (Barcelona). You control your character with a four-way joystick and one fire button. To make both lefties and righties happy, there are fire buttons located on either side of the control stick.

Each stage of *Buster Bros.* offers you a variety of ways to increase your high score. Food items, such as fruit, hamburgers and cake, will appear when you've shot enough balls or all of the breakable ledges. They can range in score from 500 points (for oranges) to 50,000 points (for cake). The timer in each stage is another factor you have working against you. You have 90 to120 seconds to complete each stage, and as a bonus you'll receive either 10, 50 or 100 points for each second remaining. Your points are based on how many times you die during that particular stage: 100 for no deaths, 50 for one and 10 for two or more deaths.

Now and again, there is also a spaceman that takes a stroll across the top of the screen. If you shoot him before he exits the screen, you'll receive a 10,000-point bonus. I haven't figured out what makes this little guy appear, but I do know that it's only on certain stages (the first one being Stage 5, with approximately 50 to 55 seconds remaining in the level).

Buster Bros. has exceptional graphics; the cities and countrysides are full of color and well detailed. There's really almost as much incentive in getting through a stage so you can see the next scene as there is to competing.

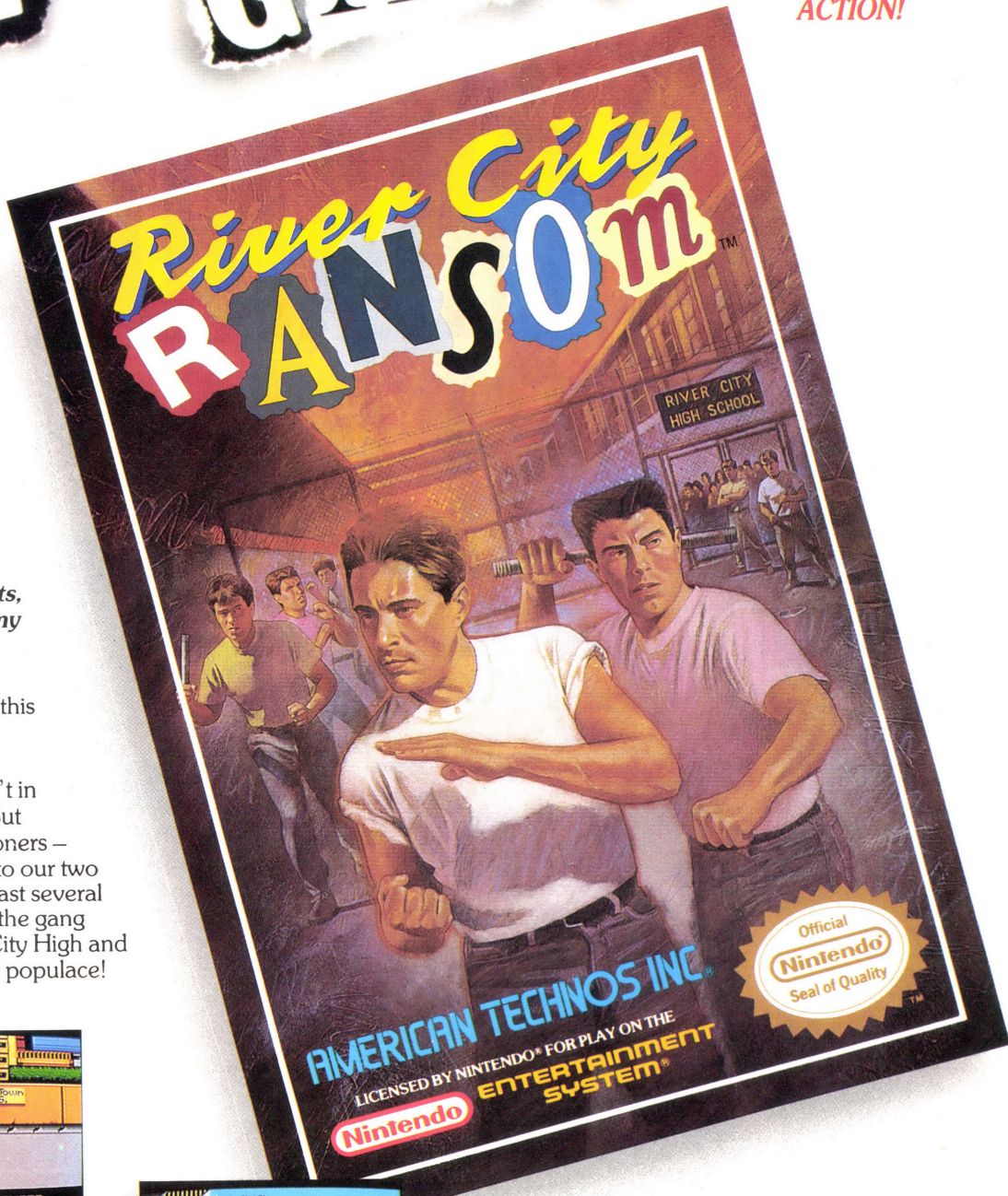
Musically, however, the game is inconsistent. Some stages have a toe-tapping melody, while others make you wonder if you changed machines and didn't realize it. As far as game play, Capcom has come up with a game that has an equal dose of simplicity and frustration. And it's a job well done. This is one arcade game that you don't want to miss.

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APPEARING AT

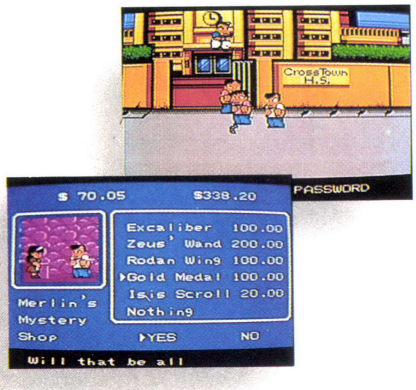
Nintendo World Championships 1990



"To the Citizens of River City: I hold your high school captive! With my gangs of students and vicious bosses roaming the streets, nobody can stop me now. Meet my demands – or else!"

Slick, the meanest, most powerful gang lord in River City, has issued this ultimatum – and the entire town is powerless in a grip of fear!

Fortunately, Alex and Ryan weren't in school the day Slick took it over. But now, their fellow students are prisoners – including Ryan's girlfriend! It's up to our two young heroes to battle their way past several dangerous city gangs, then defeat the gang lord, to free the students of River City High and restore peace to the panic-stricken populace!





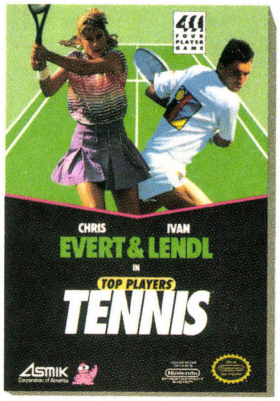
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ACE THE GRAND SLAM

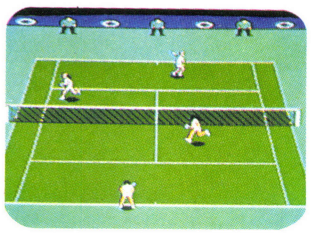
CHRIS EVERT & IVAN LENDL



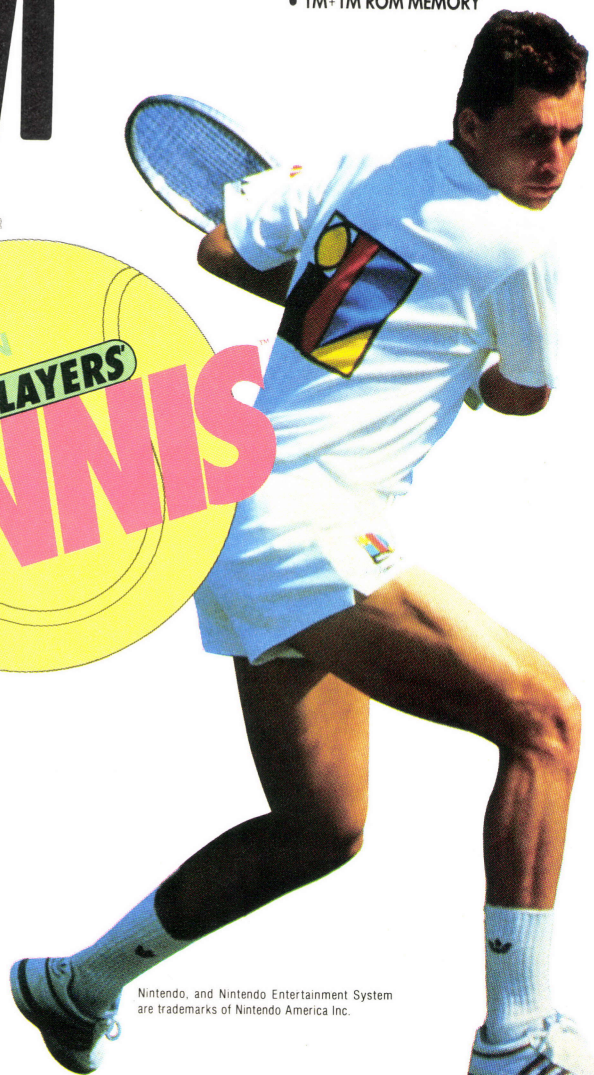
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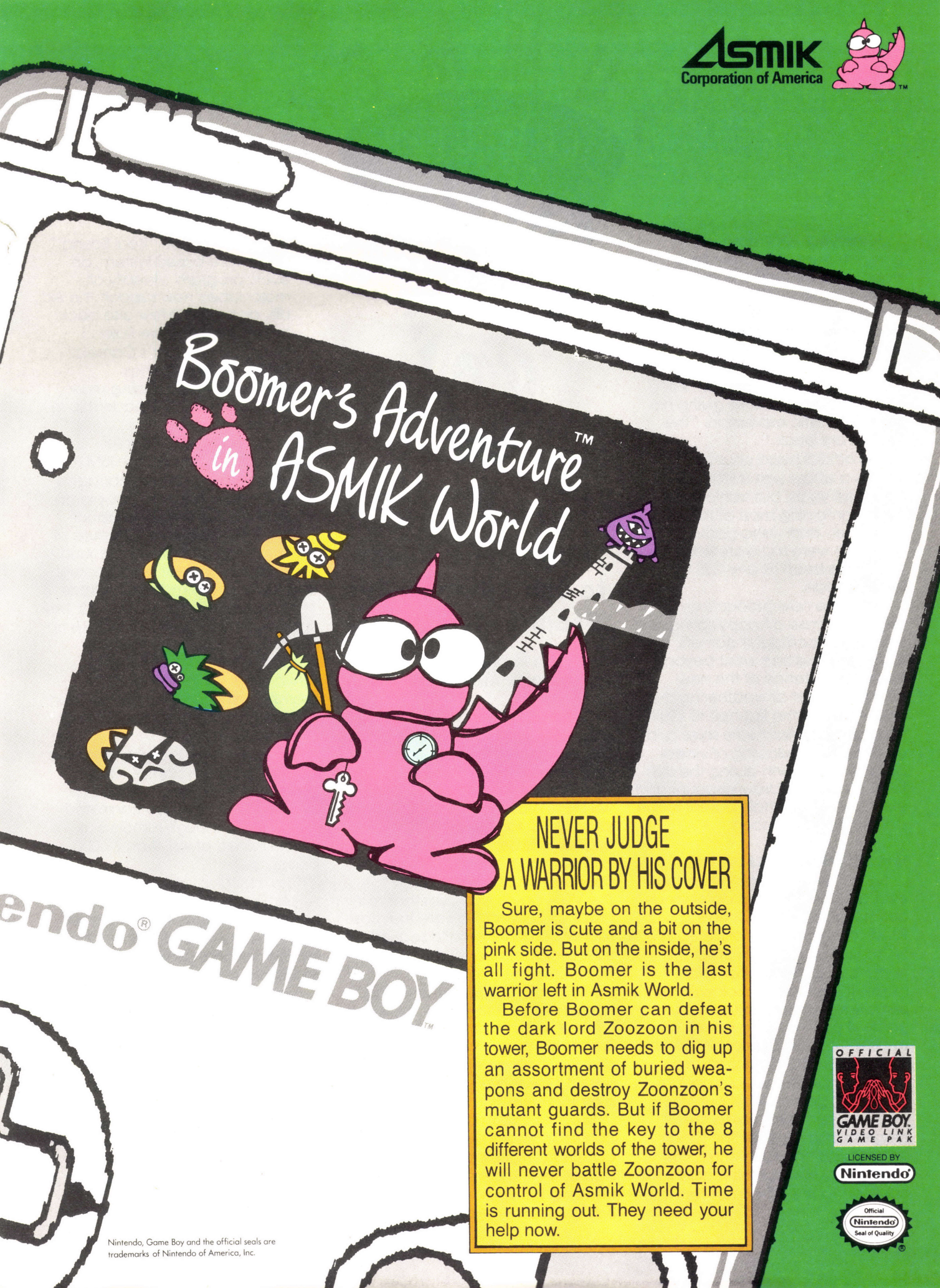
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Sure, maybe on the outside, Boomer is cute and a bit on the pink side. But on the inside, he's all fight. Boomer is the last warrior left in Asmik World.

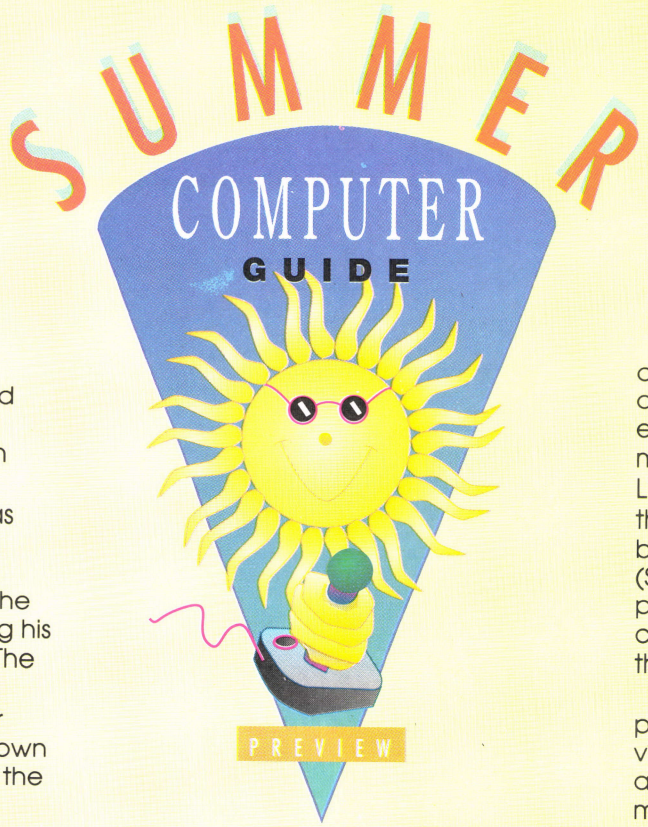
Before Boomer can defeat the dark lord Zoozoon in his tower, Boomer needs to dig up an assortment of buried weapons and destroy Zoonzoon's mutant guards. But if Boomer cannot find the key to the 8 different worlds of the tower, he will never battle Zoonzoon for control of Asmik World. Time is running out. They need your help now.

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Publishers React to the Competition From Video Games

BY ARNIE KATZ, BILL KUNKEL AND JOYCE WORLEY

A ten-year veteran in the computer-entertainment field stood in his winter Consumer Electronics Show (CES) booth and surveyed the throng of people who had come to Las Vegas for the consumer-electronics business' largest trade show. "They're back," he said softly, a small smile giving his face a beatific expression. "The crowds are back."

The official head count for CES as a whole was a little down from past years, but traffic in the aisles containing most of the computer- and video-game exhibitors were more crowded than they have been at any CES for the last five years.

While the new products on display promise a happy spring and summer for computer gamers, the level of enthusiasm went beyond mere acceptance of the new offerings. Relief at weathering the sales slump of the first-half of 1989, an upswing in hardware sales and an anticipated slowing of video-game sales growth during the shift to 16-bit systems drew discount and electronic-store chain buyers to the stalls in record numbers.

IBM REIGNS, AMIGA GAINS

No home-computer brand has ever achieved market dominance comparable to IBM. Counting Tandy and other compatibles, IBM PC makes up roughly 70% of the home-computer market. That makes it the logical choice as the primary system for almost every game project in North America, except for a few true believers who specialize in the Macintosh.

EGA is now the visual standard for IBM PC games. Most publishers won't go to market unless the program also supports the Tandy graphics system. Everyone loves VGA, of course, but this mode is still confined to the full-price, "top shelf" titles.

Dynamix blew industry minds with a full VGA version of *David Wolf: Secret Agent*. This extravaganza is going to be "13 or 14 disks," in the words of spokesman Jerry Luttrell. It will be an upgrade, priced at roughly $15 for owners of the original release.

Dynamix knows the difference between art and technology too. The VGA *David Wolf* uses that extra graphics power to create the most sophisticated cinematic sequences ever programmed for the home computer. The opening, in particular, is as good as anything turned out by Hollywood. This is a labor of love, though President Jeff Tunnell believes such projects will give Dynamix an edge when CD-based interactive games become a major business in middecade.

Skeptics said cost and market confusion would keep most IBM PC owners from adding a sound board. They underestimated the demand for high-quality audio. Access and several other companies have "Real Sound," a software-based system, on every program. Virtually all major labels now support the Ad Lib, and quite a few also back the more expensive Roland board. *King Arthur's Camelot* (Sierra for IBM PC) has particularly outstanding music, continuing Sierra's leadership in this area.

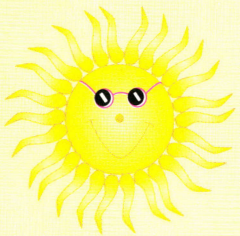
Companies build sales projections around the IBM PC version, but product managers and public-relations people do most of their bragging about the Amiga editions, because of their stunning graphics and sound. Commodore's great ad campaign and lower prices made Christmas 1989 memorable for the Amiga. The figures are not in yet, but there is no doubt that this game-oriented computer took a major step forward this winter. If the momentum can be sustained, then the Amiga could well become the C-64 of the 1990s.

Publishers remain highly selective about Macintosh games. Only a fraction of the titles produced for the IBM PC will ever be translated for the Mac, though rumors of a model priced at less than $1,000 persist.

News for Commodore 64 and Apple II users is more downbeat. It's harder and harder for companies to get products for either machine into full national distribution, especially since Consumer Software Services (CSS) folded, and Ingram and MicroD merged. Reduced availability has turned the previous sales decline into a precipitous drop in both cases.

It will be tough to find Apple II games in stores by the end of this year. Interplay and SSI are still developing new products targeted at the Apple II, but they are in the minority. Even the IIGS is languishing in the entertainment field.

The enduring popularity of the C-



SUMMER COMPUTER GAMES PREVIEW

64 in the U.K. and Europe produced a huge number of budget action games over the last three years, but that flow is quickly becoming a trickle. The 16-bit revolution finally hit there during summer 1989, and houses that once focused development on the C-64 now emphasize the more powerful machines.

Amiga has caught and passed the Atari ST in popularity, so expect somewhat fewer ST imports. While many U.S. publishers have abandoned the ST, a few remain committed to providing software for it. Upcoming translations include: *Pirates* (MicroProse), *F-19 Stealth Fighter* (MicroProse), *RVF Honda* (Medalist) and *Galactic Conquest* (Titus).

New products on display promise a happy spring and summer for computer gamers.

HIGH POLISH, LOW CONCEPT

Summer is the time for mindless action movies, sex-drenched potboilers and, apparently, slick treatments of time-tested computer-game themes and formats. Numerous new flight simulators, auto races, karate contests and driving simulations are scheduled for publication before the autumn leaves come down.

The latest buzzword in the software business is "marketing." Early companies often botched this phase of the operation, and current publishers have profited greatly from these bad examples. As with most new movements, however, the marketing mania may have gone too far. Bland, safe games with state-of-the-art audiovisuals outnumber new ones with provocative themes and innovative play mechanics by a huge margin.

LICENSE-GO-ROUND

Publishers believe licensed tie-ins are the best way to succeed in today's "soft" computer-game market. The success of titles like *RoboCop* (Data East), *Neuromancer* (Interplay) and *Batman* (Data East) has had the expected effect of encouraging companies to buy even more licenses for the coming six months.

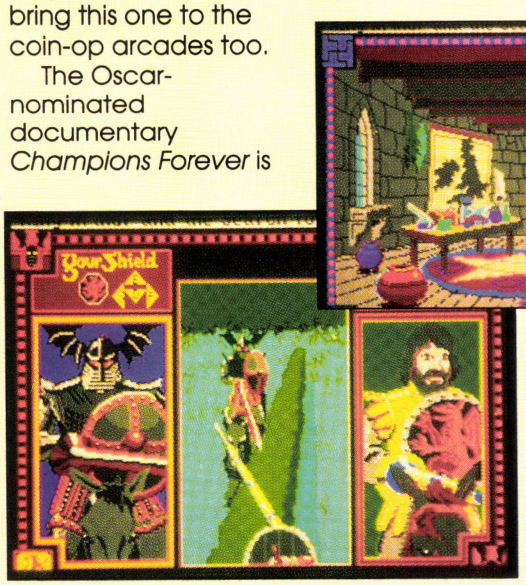
Elvira, already known as the Mistress of the Dark, is adding the electronic-gaming world to her domain. Already the star of the year's top pinball machine and the hostess of the Horrorsoft adventure game label, the exotic lady in black will now star in *Elvira's Ghost Train* for a range of video- and computer-game systems. Negotiations are under way to bring this one to the coin-op arcades too.

The Oscar-nominated documentary *Champions Forever* is giving birth to a whole line of computer- and video-sports simulations. Aiming for fall release is a boxing game featuring the five heavyweights in the video: Ali, Frazier, Foreman, Norton and Holmes.

Here's the story behind the license for *Bruce Lee Lives!* (Software Toolworks for IBM PC; other computers to come): DataSoft bought the rights, which passed to Toolworks when it bought DataSoft's successor company, Intellicreations. The new game involves plenty of martial arts action, but the treatment is more cinematic. An especially good feature is the inclusion of macro keys that allow the user to choreograph a series of moves in advance and order the on-screen hero to execute them with a single command.

Paragon Software will continue its association with Marvel Comics with another release this spring. The world of *The Punisher* (Paragon for IBM PC) is bloody and brutal, and the fast-paced action of the game reflects this with sometimes chilling faithfulness.

Other forthcoming tie-ins include: *Harlem Globetrotters* (GameTek), *Yogi Bear* (Vision), *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*, *Cardinal of the Kremlin* (Capstone) and *Champions: The Super Hero Role Playing Game* (Miles Computing).



***King Arthur's Camelot* by Sierra On-Line**

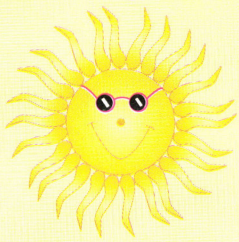
GAMES GET DEEPER

The best way to compete with video games, industry analysts have decided, is to present a rich, detailed play experience, not ape the cartridges' flash and speed. Many computerists become bored and/or frustrated by all-out action contests and miss the meatiness of a good strategy game, simulator or adventure.

International Design Group (IDG), which does the Sega line of computer translations now distributed by Electronic Arts, has announced a radical policy shift. The computer versions of Sega arcade hits like *Turbo Outrun* and *Golden Axe* will have additional features and play elements not found in the coin-op.

SUPER STRATEGY

Brain-game fans, this is your year. Publishers aim their action games at dedicated video-game systems and their more thoughtful designs



SUMMER COMPUTER GAMES PREVIEW

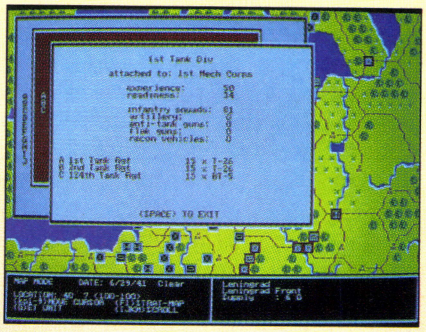
at the home-computer audience. The success of *Populous*, named VIDEOGAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT's 1989 Best Computer Game of the Year, numerous flight and tank simulators, *Tetris*, SSI's AD&D line and other strategy-heavy contests has most entertainment publishers moving toward the "big think" games.

Chris Crawford, designer of such mind-stretching gems as *Balance of Power 1990* and *Trust & Betrayal* (Mindscape for IBM PC, Macintosh), has a couple of new titles bound to excite his loyal following. *Guns and Butter* (Minsdscape for IBM PC, Macintosh) is more or less in the same family as *Balance*, but political machinations are less important than economic activity. Millions of randomly generated continents can be enjoyed at any of three skill levels, and the artificial intelligence of the computer-controlled players is outstanding.

Crawford's other new entry, still untitled as VG&CE goes to press, is a sweeping environmental simulator. Crawford plans to publish this game, originally slated to appear under the Epyx banner, himself around midyear. While details are sketchy, the author and subject matter promise a thoughtful and detailed examination of the interrelationship among all elements of the planetary ecosphere.

Is there anyone who doesn't have a fond feeling for *Defender of the Crown*? Kellen Beck, the lead designer on that project, is readying a new one for release by fall. *Caesar* (Electronic Arts for IBM PC; other computers to follow) is an arcade strategy game about the Roman Empire. The player can fight in a gladiatorial arena, race chariots and fight Rome's numerous enemies on the battlefield. The combat portion of the game is similar to the combat sequence in Cinemaware's *Lords of the Rising Sun*, and provides a good balance between fast action and tactical flexibility.

Popular board games are earmarked for electronic editions by midyear. Virgin Mastertronic's Leisure Genius group in Great Britain has completed *Clue* and *Risk*. Both programs are faithful enough to satisfy fans of the nonelectronic contests and easy enough to learn and play for anyone who isn't already familiar with them. Much care has gone into the development of both, and users will be especially pleased by the artificial intelligence of the computer-controlled opponents.



SSI's *Second Front*

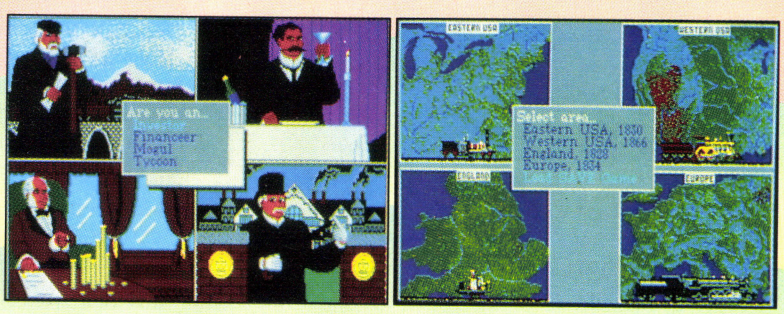
Parker Brothers is returning to electronic-game publishing after an absence from the field of about four years. Parker, which plans to produce both video and computer games, will lead off with *Trivial Pursuit* (Parker Brothers for IBM PC). The board game, which challenges participants to display their esoteric knowledge by answering trivia questions in several areas, was a gigantic craze about two years ago, and Parker Brothers hopes that computerists will be as enthusiastic. Sid Meier's *Railroad Tycoon* (MicroProse for IBM PC) is the most exciting of the strategy games due for launch this spring and summer. This legendary designer has struck pay dirt again with a simulation of the "robber baron" era of railroad construction in the late-19th century United States. The simulation itself is highly absorbing, and *Railroad Tycoon's* art and music are really first-rate.

Dan Bunten and his Ozark Softscape team haven't scored with a major hit since *Seven Cities of Gold* (Electronic Arts), but players can always count on innovative products from this source. Now with a new publisher, Ozark is readying a strategic-level, military diplomatic contest with the working title *War!* (MicroProse for IBM PC) as a major summer introduction. The subject matter is a departure for Bunten, which often disdains violent subject matter, but it's a safe bet that the finished product will be worthy of all gamers' attention.

Gary Grigsby invents some of the finest military simulations anywhere, electronic or nonelectronic, and his new *Second Front* (SSI for IBM PC; other computer systems to come) is a feast for students of World War II tactics and strategy. This comprehensive treatment of the bloody Eastern Front is primarily for advanced war gamers who are ready to tackle the complexity of a struggle involving over 350 divisions.

Fans of the original can look forward to *Silent Service II* (MicroProse for IBM PC). The revamped action simulation of undersea warfare features external views of the submarine, action in the Atlantic and Pacific, increased opportunity for combat and a full-dress campaign scenario. The most obvious change is that *Silent Service II* supports EGA, VGA and Tandy graphics for a more colorful look.

Railroad Tycoon by MicroProse



COMPUTER ACTION

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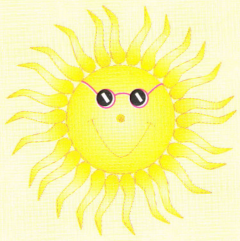
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they were a year ago when video games threatened to push software for the less popular systems right off store shelves. There are still plenty of real-time thrillers available, though many designers are now trying to balance nonstop action with on-the-fly strategy decisions in an attempt to make their creations more appealing to older players.





***Ski or Die* by Electronic Arts**

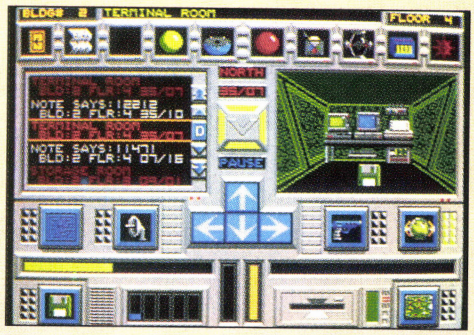
In the tradition of last year's smash hit *Skate or Die* comes *Ski or Die* (Electronic Arts for IBM PC). Like VG&CE's 1989 Action Game of the Year, *Ski or Die* is a multi-event anthology, this time based on off-the-wall snow sports. Events include a dizzying ski jump, a snowboard slalom and a snowball free-for-all.

Golden Axe (Sega for most computer systems) puts the exciting 1989 coin-op on the computer-gaming screen. The player controls a fighter who can move from side to side as well as forward and back, as in earlier combat contests.

Power Drift (Activision for IBM PC, C-64) is a pulse-pounding race that has done very well for Sega in coin-op palaces over the last year or so. More than two dozen grueling tracks with roller-coaster hills await the driver, who competes against colorful, road-hogging foes.

Another Sega quarter-snatcher, *Turbo Outrun* (Sega for all computer systems), is about to roll into the home market, courtesy of International Design Group. Complete with a few extra touches not found on the coin-op, the home version of *Turbo Outrun* serves up a tasty mix of high-speed thrills, strategy and some of the best roadside scenery this side of Spectrum Holobyte's *Vette!*

Typical of the more complex action games now under development for home computers is *Crime Wave* (Access for IBM PC). This high-quality scroller is a symphony of spectacular animated images and Real Sound-enhanced audio. The player must rescue the President's daughter and clear the cities of the gangs that have turned them into twilight worlds of violence and corruption.



Accolade's *Day of the Viper*

A cyborg and his robot army have captured a key installation in the 28th century of *Day of the Viper* (Accolade for IBM PC, Amiga, Atari ST). It's up to the player to guide infiltration robot Viper-Five through a gauntlet of more than 30 mechanical foes. Real-time order entry and an engrossing storyline make *Day of the Viper* especially good for those who enjoy action adventures.

SPEAKING OF SPORTS

The computer-entertainment business has more or less recovered from hoop mania. It seems like every company had a basketball game on the drawing board last year. In 1990, the hot sport is boxing.

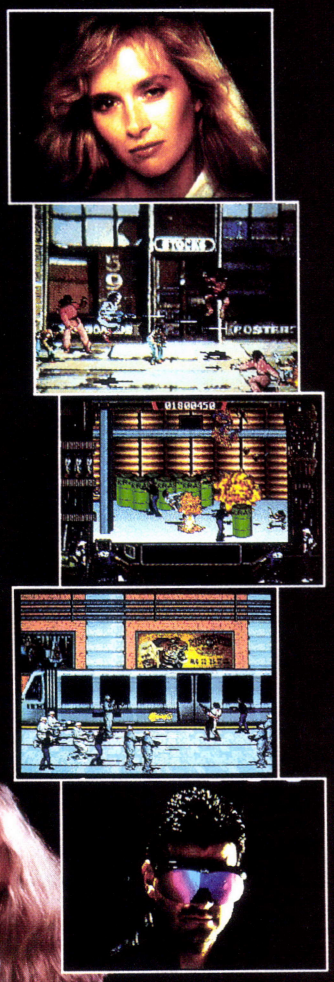
While it's known that as many as six boxing games are currently in development, it's still too early for companies to break their tight-lipped silence. This field is so competitive that publishers are understandably shy about revealing too many details that a rival could copy. Among titles already announced are *Low Blow* (Electronic Arts for IBM PC; other computers later) and *TV Sports: Boxing* (Cinemaware for all home computers). The former will reportedly inject some humor into the ring action, while the latter will have the glitz and trimmings of the rest of the *TV Sports* line. Rumored to be in the works is a boxing simulation based on the *Champions Forever* video that reaped much praise last year.

The National Pastime never goes out of style. Look for a pair of major releases out in time for summer that could become category leaders.

Beyond Software, led by that producer's producer Don Daglow, weighs in with *TV Sports: Baseball* (Cinemaware for IBM PC, Amiga). It takes EA's *Earl Weaver Baseball* head-on with a choice of action- or statistic-based simulation. Besides all the frills and extra gamers expect from every Cinemaware disk, *TV Sports: Baseball* boasts a smooth interface and an intricate mathematical model.

MicroLeague Baseball Pennant Fever (MLSA for Amiga, Commodore 64) is a collaboration between Subway Software, which designed *MLB II*, and Ed Daniels, author of *Pure Stat Baseball* (Software Simulations). It has both the uncompromising statistical accuracy of the latter and the silky smooth user interface of the former. This stat game with full-screen animated graphics is aimed at the hard-core electronic-baseball

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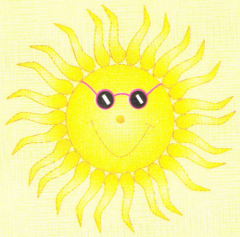
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gamer, though the audiovisual effects make it very entertaining for even a casual fan.

Think electronic tennis games are outdated? From France comes a refreshingly original simulation of the sport, *Pro Tennis Tour: The Ultimate Tennis Simulation* (UBI Soft for IBM PC, Amiga, Atari ST, Commodore 64). Racqueteers compete in the four major championships, or they can practice against another player or the computer. The program offers three difficulty settings and a choice of grass, clay or cement courts.

Lovers of the electronic links should practice their putting and driving in preparation for the arrival of *PGA Tour Golf* (Electronic Arts for IBM PC). Up to four people can enter the PGA Tournament and participate in a four-round tour event using a custom-designed golfer. This is a comprehensive simulation of the life of a professional golfer.

The "Great White Shark," Greg Norman is your host in *Shark Attack* (Melbourne House for IBM PC, Amiga, Atari ST, Commodore 64). Subtitled *Greg Norman's Ultimate Golf*, this beautiful simulation allows the computerist to view the fairways, traps and greens in exciting 3-D perspective. It's even possible to stand in one spot and rotate your view 360 degrees! The on-screen swinger, a digitized picture of Norman himself, can practice or try stroke play, greensome, match play and Texas scramble against up to three other human or computer-controlled participants. You can even take a professional caddy out on the links to give sage advice about how to attack each hole!

GATEWAY TO ADVENTURE

The return to richness and complexity has had a positive impact on the adventure and role-playing category. After a 12-month lull, during which few adventures made their debut, the next half-year will see a marked upswing in the number of new titles.

Fantasy is still the most popular theme, with science fiction second and mystery/suspense third. Adventures still outnumber role-playing games, but RPGs are closing the gap as they add more sophisticated plots to shed their old "seek and destroy" image.

When Richard (Lord British) Garriott premieres a new chapter of the Ultima saga, electronic adventurers stand up and cheer. *Ultima VI: The False Prophet* (Origin for IBM PC; other computers to come) provides plenty of reason to celebrate.





New World Computing's *King's Bounty*

The concluding title in Garriott's second trilogy about a war against the Gargoyles from the underground is Lord British in top form, and it doesn't get much better than that. The plot concerns a previously hidden side of the villains from *Ultima IV and V*, which sends the player in an unexpected direction in what the designer calls "the Ultimate *Ultima*."

Champions of Krynn (SSI for IBM PC, Amiga, Apple II and Commodore 64) is the first Dragonlance title done in the fantasy role-playing (FRPG) format. The player leads a party of adventurers through many perils to thwart an attempt by the Black Queen to usurp the throne of Krynn. Tanis and other characters from the Dragonlance series of *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* games appear throughout the quest as nonplayer characters.

Fellowship of the Ring (Interplay for IBM PC) is the first of Brian Fargo's three games based on the immortal *Lord of the Rings*, by J. R. R. Tolkien. In an exclusive interview with VG&CE, Fargo explained that this interactive epic's plot structure will generally follow the storyline in the trilogy, but that players will be able to take "side trips" and experience secondary adventures mentioned in passing in the novels.

Kristy Marks and Peter Leger, well-known to fans of Saturday morning animated series, make their gaming debut with *King Arthur's Camelot* (Sierra for IBM PC). Executed using the latest version of Sierra's adventuring system, this search for the Holy Grail features outstanding artwork and music, a multipathed plot and a lively style of conversation.



***Bad Blood* by Origin Systems**

Data East is a new name in the adventure category, but one familiar to lovers of action-oriented computer games such as *Karate Champ*. The company's new Draconian label leads with two adventures with role-playing overtones: *Drakkhen* and *Chamber of the Sci-Mutant Priestesses*.

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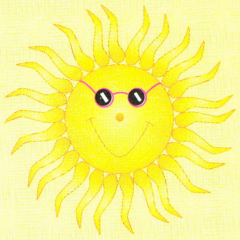
Animating digitized images and synchronizing them with great voice and sound simulation for IBM P.C. make Mean Streets more realistic than anything you may already have experienced. To call Mean Streets just another computer game is an understatement!
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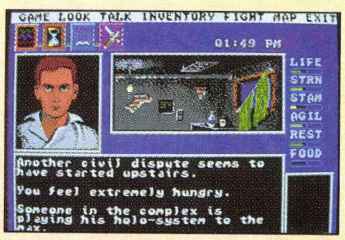
SUMMER COMPUTER GAMES PREVIEW

The only way to preserve the kingdom is to save the dragons in *Drakkhen* (Data East for IBM PC and Amiga). More than 150 monsters fill the game's 240 locations, and there's an arsenal of 200 magical spells to use in the battle against the dark forces.

The puzzle-solving adventure *Chamber of the Sci-Mutant Priestesses* (Data East for IBM PC and Amiga) casts the player as a telepathic mutant who leads a rebellion against the Protozorqs. To rescue his abducted girlfriend, the high priestess Sci-Fi (no kidding!), the player must survive the Five Ordeals of Deilos, each a convoluted conundrum.

The title most likely to interest veteran RPGers is *MegaTraveller* (Paragon Software for IBM PC), the electronic version of the outstanding Game Designers' Workshop role-playing series. *MegaTraveller* is to science-fiction RPGing what *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* is in the fantasy RPG field. Spacefarers can generate highly individualized characters with any of 70 different abilities and send them out to explore *MegaTraveller*'s fascinating universe. Paragon plans to support all major sound boards to go with EGA/VGA visuals.

Westwood Associate's *Circuit's Edge* (Infocom for IBM PC) is the healthiest sign from the one-time leader in the adventure gaming field. This is indisputably the freshest and most exciting title Infocom has marketed since the days of *Deadline*. There is still a lot of text output, but the action is controller-guided and the interactive graphics are the best this company has ever done.



Infocom's *Circuit's Edge*

George Alec Effinger's novels provide the setting for this journey into the seamy underbelly of a 23rd century ghetto called the Budayeen. In the role of private investigator Marid Audran, the computerist prowls the dangerous streets and alleys to retrieve a notebook stolen from the local crime boss. *Circuit's Edge* is a "must buy" for adventurers who want something more than just another outer space slugfest.

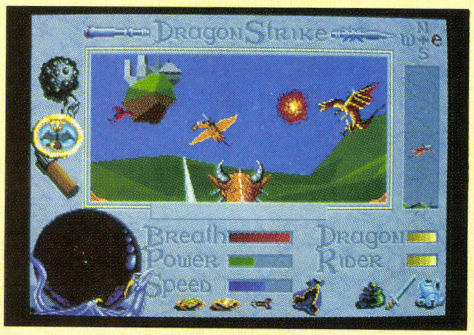
Apocalyptic visions of tomorrow's Earth will be plentiful this season. And speaking of the seasons, Old Man Winter has come to stay in *Midwinter* (Medalist Software for IBM PC). This icon-driven adventure packs real-time punch: The player travels by skis, hang glider or snow buggy to discharge his duties as the leader of the Free Villages Peace Force. When a dictator takes control of the southern villages, it's up to the computerist to investigate the situation and liberate the towns.

The Earth will collide with a mechanically propelled asteroid unless the hero of *At Earthrise* (Interstel for IBM PC) diverts the moonlet in time. The margin for error is zero, since the player is stranded on the asteroid! Interstel's first interactive graphics adventure has more than 100 rooms to explore.

Times of Lore author Chris Roberts takes computerists to a post-nuclear war society in *Bad Blood* (Origin for IBM PC and Commodore 64). There's lots of combat action against mutant creatures in this action-adventure, but the game system also allows users to talk to a wide range of nonplayer characters. The goal is to stop Lord Dominix's war against the free mutants in this colorful mix of the blast-'em-up and RPG genres.

Jim Walls, designer of the *Police Quest* series, goes international with *Code Name: Iceman* (Sierra for IBM PC). As Navy SEAL Johnny Westland, the player is an intrepid counterspy who must deliver an American ambassador from the clutches of terrorists. The game is built around a futuristic submarine simulator, but the globetrotting hero gets to do a lot more than just scythe through the oceans in the stealth sub. Action runs from the polar ice cap to tropical beaches in Walls' latest triumph.

If the idea of painstakingly working a character up from a serf doesn't sound like fun, *King's Bounty* (New World Computing for Apple II; other computers later) may be exactly the game for you. A gang of villains has swiped the Scepter of Order, and the computerist assumes the role of the hero, who must scour four continents to retrieve it. An unusual feature of *King's Bounty* is that it gives the player a chance to dabble in mass battles as well as perform feats of gallantry.



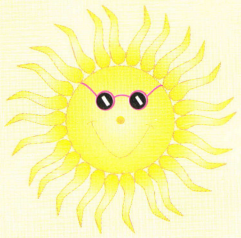
***Dragonstrike* by SSI**

The somewhat delayed *Loom* (Lucasfilm for IBM PC, Amiga and Atari ST) looks like it is definitely worth the extra wait. The publisher's first fantasy adventure game is set in a mythical "Age of Guilds." As Bobbin, a magic-using member of the Weavers, the adventurer plays a pivotal role in a battle between good and evil. Lucasfilm subsidiary Sprocket Systems has produced a Dolby stereo cassette to go with the on-screen presentation. The game itself features a text-free icon interface that Lucasfilm believes is a major step forward in playability.

SIMULATIONS STAY HOT

Planes, cars and tanks continue to be the hot topics for simulation games. Truly revolutionary breakthroughs are not too common, though every company is

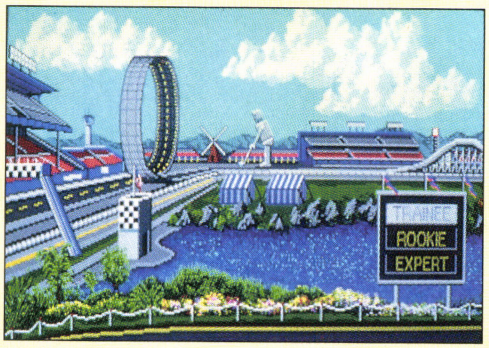

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pushing technology to its limit.

Indianapolis 500: The Simulation (Electronic Arts for IBM PC), for example, has little novelty in graphics or play action, but it sets new standards for the IBM PC in sheer speed of animation. Crossing the finish line ahead of 32 other drivers takes practice, a knack for



***Stunt Driver* by Spectrum Holobyte**

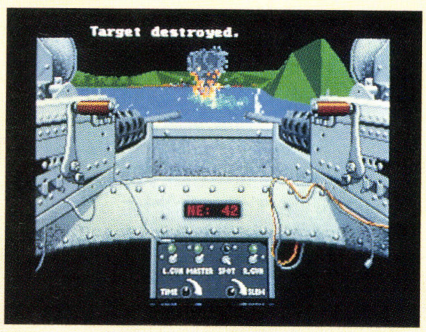
fine-tuning the racer's eight adjustable systems and a lead foot. During the race, the computerist views the action from any of six different perspectives and can study crucial moments of the race via instant replay.

Gunboat: River Combat Simulation (Accolade for IBM PC; other computers to come) introduces landlubbers to a type of naval combat seldom reproduced in electronic games. A new graphic technique that utilizes polygon-fill backgrounds overlaid with bit-mapped foreground objects generates lots of realistically detailed scenery. This real-time simulation of warfare on the rivers of Vietnam, Panama and Colombia gives more insight into this type of military action than a stack of history books. There's real tension and excitement in just cruising down the river, never knowing whether friend or foe lurks around the next bend.

Deep sea salvage is the theme of *Treasure Trap* (Electronic Zoo for the IBM PC, Amiga and Atari ST). The sunken *Esmerelda* has 100 rooms for the player to explore in this richly detailed joystick-activated adventure. This is Electronic Zoo's first product, and the company is backing its bet with exceptionally detailed sound and graphics. Digital divers will be able to hear the bubbles rise from the breath apparatus and examine fish and objects in minute detail.

Dragonstrike (SSI for IBM PC) is the most innovative and unusual flight simulation in the spring and summer crop. Set in the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* Dragonlance universe, it's a simulation of combat between warriors mounted on flying dragons. Forget missiles and machine guns in this one—players must guide the creatures and use the dragon's fearsome teeth, claws and breath weapon to win the battle.

Flight of the Intruder (Spectrum Holobyte for IBM PC) is another fine title from a company that has assumed a leadership role in this category in recent years. Superb animated graphics, a fairly smooth



***Gunboat: River Combat Simulation* by Accolade**

play system and the usual outstanding action highlight the latest addition to the Spectrum Holobyte catalog. A big selling point for this one is the excellent scenery. Some otherwise outstanding flight simulators fall down in this area, leading to boring flights to nowhere. *Flight of the Intruder* gives the armchair aviator plenty to see.

Cinemaware seldom takes the orthodox approach to any subject, and *Wings* (Cinemaware for IBM PC, Amiga and Atari ST) won't be confused with other flight simulators. The player takes to the skies over Europe in a World War I biplane, shown from an unusual behind-the-cockpit perspective. The stunning flying sequences are the core of *Wings*, but the game attempts to recreate the life of a combat pilot, not just the aerial battles.

The 1984 International Bombing Competition for top pilots and planes from all major nations is the basis for *Strike Aces* (Accolade for IBM PC, Amiga and Commodore 64). The player chooses a plane from among 13 different aircraft and tries to earn glory in 16 combat missions. And if those grow less challenging, a module lets the computerist assemble an infinite number of new ones.

LHX Attack Chopper (Electronic Arts for IBM PC) is an attempt to give computerists the jump on a real-life helicopter. The program simulates four different modern copters, one of which, the LHX, hasn't even been deployed yet by the Marines. The 3-D graphics include 12 external views, with the most exciting being from the nose of one of the chopper's missiles as it homes in on a target.

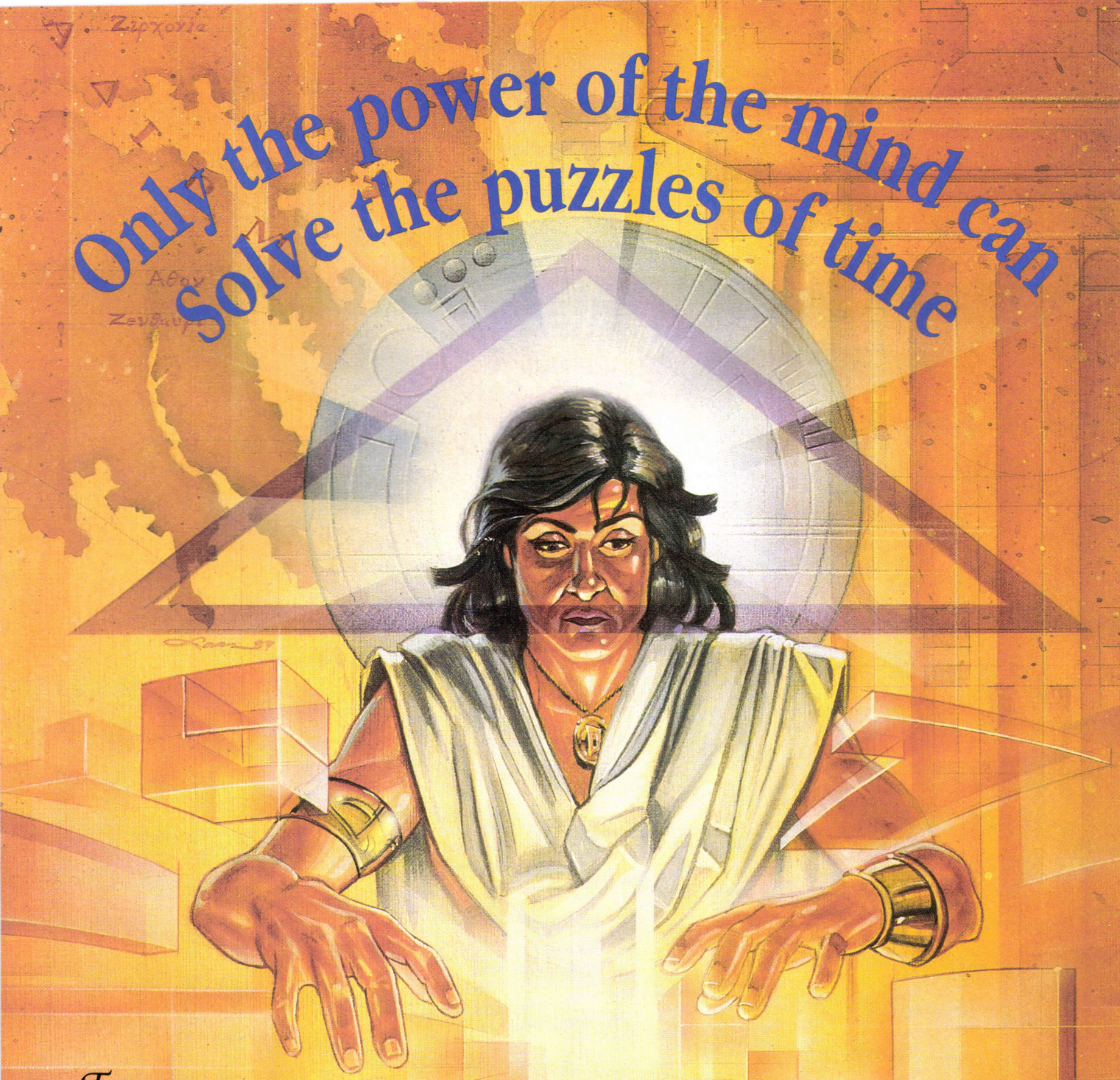
An interesting variation on driving games is *Stunt Driver* (Spectrum Holobyte for IBM PC). The daredevil driver roars through loops, jumps and other obstacles at top speed in this enjoyable action simulation.

THE CRYSTAL BALL

The hot competition among publishers keeps most companies on guard against tipping their new products plans. These games are only a fraction of the ones that will be published between now and Labor Day. Some of the titles mentioned in this article may never quite make it to market, but secret projects will compensate.

This year's products, as a group, could well be better than the batch that ended the decade. The increased popularity of 16-bit computers is encouraging publishers to take a few more risks, and the prospect of a CD game market in 1992 is a powerful incentive to gear up design and development now.

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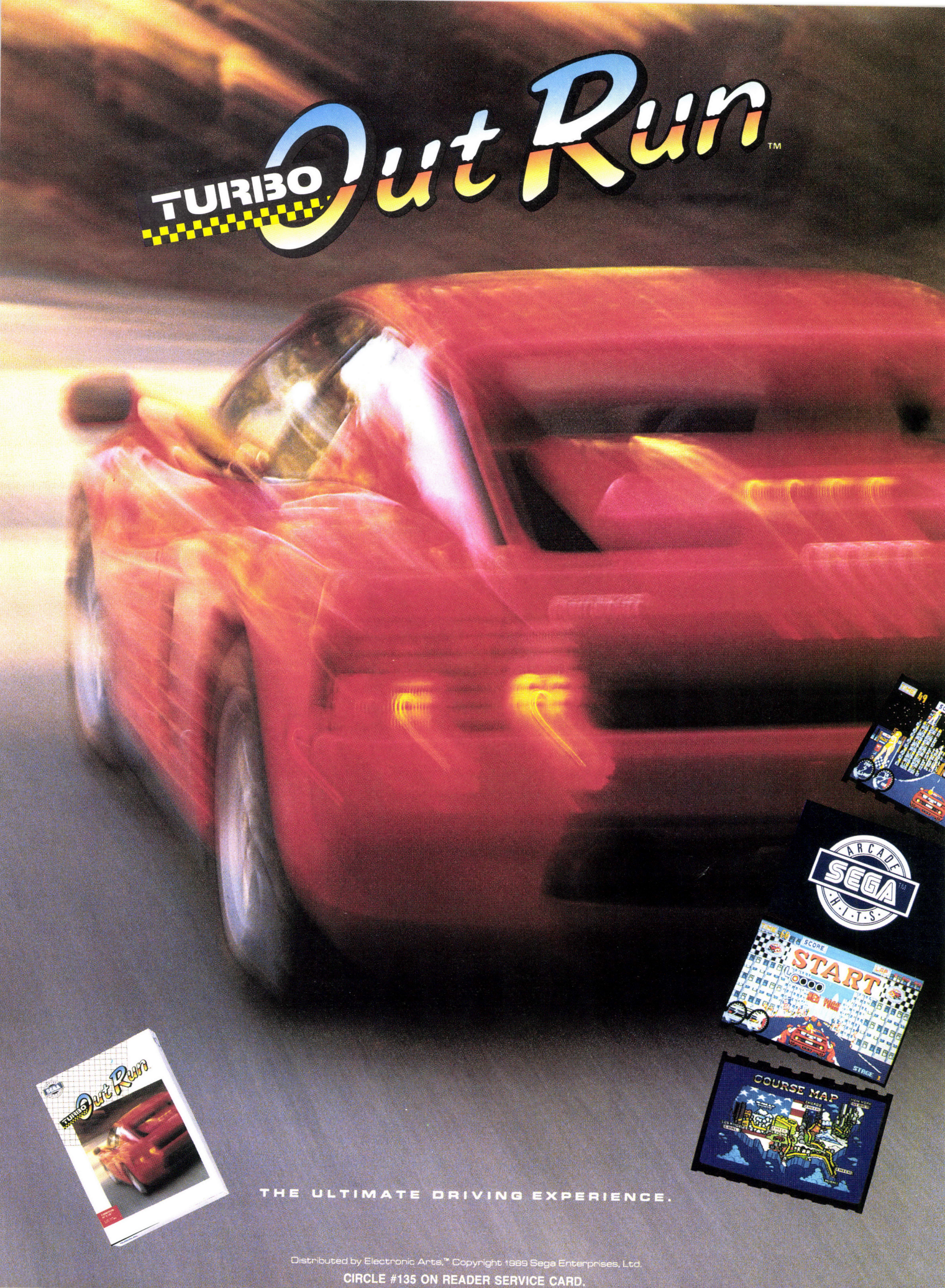
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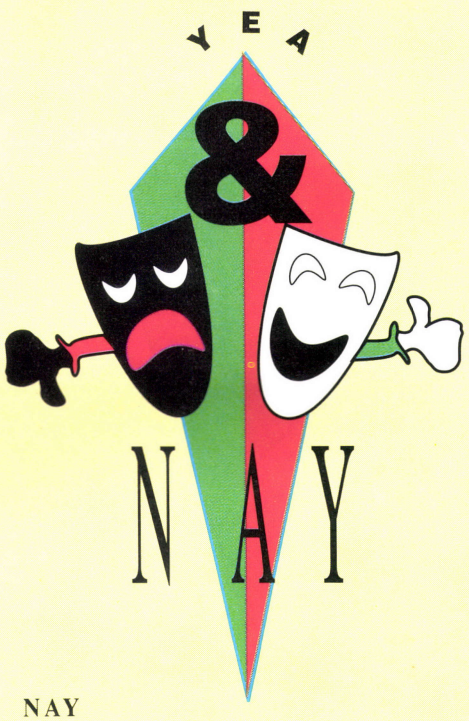
TURBO OutRun™



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Yea & Nay *is an inside look at the high and low points in the electronic-game industry. It's an opportunity for the companies that decide what games we'll be playing to be patted on the back or slammed to the mat for what they do.*

If you want to give credit where credit is due—whether the company belongs in the Hall of Fame or the Hall of Shame—send your opinions to VG&CE, *9171 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 300, Beverly Hills, CA 90210, Attn:* Yea & Nay. *Let's hear how you feel!*

YEA

We'll be the first to admit that we're not exactly Nintendo's favorite fan, but it does have the most popular game system on the market. We give it credit for its approach to helping the customer with its World Class Service program.



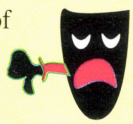
This concept, linked to some of the World of Nintendo centers found in certain stores, will allow a customer to bring their NES equipment in for diagnosis and, in some cases, repair. The process, similar to the one that Atari had in place when their 2600 was the king of the hill, will eliminate the cost and "down time" of sending a game console back to Nintendo for a possibly unnecessary evaluation.

It's hard for us to believe, given the cost of NES cartridges, but it appears that Nintendo is actually trying to help the consumer with this one.



NAY

VG&CE has to take Atari to task here for the packaging—or lack thereof—of its Lynx game cards. While the cartridges are no doubt sturdy enough to handle some mild jostling, the *Blue Lightning* game manual—and we assume all Lynx game manuals—contains the following: "Warning: Do not touch the game card connector pins."



This is all well and good, but Atari has provided no convenient means of protecting these cards from the elements. When you buy an NES cartridge, you get the outside box and a sleeve that the cart sits in. SMS and Genesis games come in a video cassette-type container. TurboCards for the TurboGrafx-16 are packaged in jewel boxes reminiscent of compact discs. Even the miniscule Game Boy cartridges offer a snap-closed case for full protection. Meanwhile, Atari has skimped on their packaging, which is nothing more than a box the size of an NES cartridge container.

A few years ago, the CD industry caught all sorts of grief from consumers for trying to cut costs by packaging discs in a cardboard sleeve, similar (though smaller) to vinyl-record covers. Most people stressed that the main selling point of a CD had to do with its being able to last forever; but this cheapskate approach leaves the disc open to scratching and bending.

It's time for Atari to face facts: If it wants to release an innovative product like the Lynx, it should also take some strides to make the consumer feel comfortable with the purchase. If you pay $30-$40 for a game cartridge, it wouldn't hurt to toss in an inexpensive plastic case to put the carts in. What do you say, folks?

YEA or NAY?

Frankly we're not sure whether to hate this idea or not, and we'll explain in a bit why we're in a quandary.

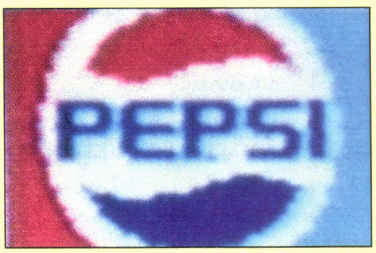
As we reported in April's News Bits, Pepsi has reached an agreement with Tradewest to display its logo a couple of times during Magic Johnson's Fast Break for the NES. While this results in nothing less than an advertisement, and we all hate commercials during TV shows, this is certainly a more passive form of advertising. Then again, if you look carefully at many movies, you'll see how distracting these little plugs can be—as the star raises X Soda to his lips or a bus goes by with a Y Potato Chip placard on the side.

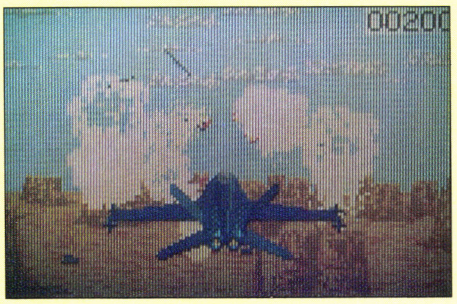


Certainly, this form of advertising isn't new to electronic gaming: simply look at the Pole Position arcade game for proof of that, with its myriad company placards flying by along the roadside. It's somewhat harmless in essence.

Furthermore, the Prodigy online service, which is a collaboration between Sears and IBM, features an advertisement on every "page" of its service, which cuts down on the size of the display but undoubtedly serves to lower the user's cost to an affordable $9.95 per month.

Finally, we have to be honest here: We've recently reached an agreement with Sharedata to have VG&CE's logo "advertised" within the upcoming IBM PC release of RollerGames in return for involvement in a contest the company will be holding, so we're somewhat biased on this issue. We'd like to hear whether you think passive advertising is good or bad. We reserve judgement.







Gaming and Glasnost

by

Arnie Katz

Writer, editor, lecturer and game designer Arnie Katz knows the field from every perspective. Each month his column takes readers inside the world of video and computer games. This month he discusses a meeting between East and West, relating it to the current state of American software publishing.

By the time this issue of VIDEOGAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT gets to newsstands, you'll have read enough interviews with *Tetris* author Alexey Pajitnov to last until the next sequel after *Welltris.*

Spectrum Holobyte, Pajitnov's U.S. publisher, kindly extended an invitation for us to interview him too. We just as politely declined. Every computer magazine had requested time to ask the Soviet software star the same inevitable ten questions during his visit to the Consumer Electronics Show. Printing "just another interview" didn't sound like the best way to serve the readership, so we asked if we could just meet him instead.

I am sad to report that computer gaming is not the international language of mutual understanding. Alexey Pajitnov is obviously a bright, inquisitive and creative fellow, but collision with our culture appeared to have left him with lots of apprehensions and misapprehensions about us. As Bill Kunkel pointed out, Pajitnov's trip had not exactly brought him into contact with mainstream America. He flew by jet from Moscow to Las Vegas and landed on the Strip in the middle of the Winter Consumer Electronics Show. They showed him a bunch of neopsychedelic commercials about being "*Tetris*-ized" and took him to an endless succession of press conferences and receptions.

Cosmonaut training would have been better preparation for this trip than a copy of *Fodor's Guide to America.* A course in how to handle a first contact with extraterrestrials might have helped Pajitnov withstand sudden immersion into a setting that, even by American standards, is weird and wacky.

I fear that Pajitnov's visit left him with the impression that all Americans are incredibly rich, tirelessly negotiate deals all day long and consume vast quantities of food and alcoholic beverages. Having the U.S. burst upon him in all its materialistic glory only emphasized the current gap between the two cultures.

"You do not understand us," he said to me, a little sadness in his voice. He was right, of course. My ignorance about our chief Cold War sparring partner is encyclopedic, and I probably know a little more about the U.S.S.R. than the average person. A million games of *Tetris* had not increased my insight into the plight of Soviet computer gamers and game creators, which Pajitnov tried to outline for us.

Without going into too much detail, I think it's fair to predict that the Soviet Union will neither provide a lot of hot new games for America nor become a major market for entertainment software produced here and elsewhere in the West. Maybe some time in the future, like the end of the 1990s, but not now.

The recent liberalization and democratization in the Soviet Union has given the average citizen the right to own such once-prohibited equipment as a typewriter, fax machine or home computer. The problem, Pajitnov lamented, is that these devices are so expensive that only the most affluent can even dream of affording them.

Worse yet, supplies are even harder to get than the machinery itself. Anyone who has ever spent an afternoon scrounging through an office in search of at least one disk that can be erased and reused knows the frustration Pajitnov and other computerists experience 24 hours a day in the U.S.S.R. Glasnost, if Gorbachev's policies are eventually successful, will ultimately alleviate the shortages, but an adequate supply of hardware, software and supplies is only one of the prerequisites for a thriving computer entertainment hobby.

What else has to happen before "CommissarSoft" or "Siberia On-Line" crack the U.S. best-seller charts? Several important conditions must be satisfied before computer and games captivate the comrades.

Leisure time is easily the most important factor, because it affects both potential creators and players. Red-baiters have accused the U.S.S.R. of everything under the sun in the last 40 years, except laziness. The low standard of living requires Soviet citizens to work long, hard hours to acquire the necessities

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CIRCLE #136 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

of life. This doesn't leave a lot of time for puttering with programming or playing computer games.

Better working conditions, shorter hours and higher pay are all goals of the current regime. If Gorbachev's policies bear fruit, the increase in leisure time will encourage Russians to take up more hobbies. Some will take a technical interest in computers, while others will be drawn to the enjoyable pastime of gaming on the machines.

Development of a computer hobbyist community is also crucial. Business-oriented programmers don't suddenly burst forth with *Kings Quest.* Study the great game programmers and one common thread emerges: They spent hours locked away in a room with their own computer. Schooling carries programmers only so far, and the most important lessons are often self-taught.

The lack of formal structure and discipline in the hobby setting promotes the kind of thinking that leads to games instead of new air-conditioning control systems. It may sound like a paradox, but most programmers acquire technique in an unscientific, seemingly unproductive way—they fool around with the machine's capabilities until things they like appear on the screen.

Soviets need greater familiarity with games designed in other countries. Even Alexey Pajitnov doesn't see more than a few of the hundreds of games produced in the U.S. and abroad each year.

This lack of exposure to electronic games puts Soviet designers at a tremendous disadvantage compared to their overseas colleagues. Knowing what others have done is a boost for new creativity.

Ignorance of existing games causes Russians to reinvent the wheel when they sit down to invent a game. Every American designer stands on the shoulders of the men and women who have brought us to the current level. We may not explicitly imitate—or rip off—Chris Crawford, Roberta Williams, Bill Hogue and other luminaries, but every contemporary designer benefits from the lessons they have learned by studying the masterworks.

Soviet designers and programmers also need the opportunity to talk shop with others of the same ilk. A Soviet game designer has no frame of reference, no stimulating cross-fertilization with other congenial minds. Personally, a couple of hours in the company of other gamemakers energizes and inspires me. In the short run, it means that the U.S.S.R. should probably foster a cultural exchange that would send their designers to shows and conferences in the West.

These comments aren't meant to suggest that the Soviet Union will never produce computer games, only that circumstances will prevent them from doing much in this field for at least the next few years.

Which is not to say that we can't learn some valuable lessons from *Tetris.* I once wrote that although *Tetris* was clearly the Game of the Year in 1988, it would not have been published if submitted by an American designer. This was meant more as a negative comment about the U.S. publishing business than a knock against Pajitnov's brainchild. It's hard to imagine one of our big, marketing-driven American companies putting out a game as elegantly simple as *Tetris* in the normal course of operation. Special circumstances allowed *Tetris* to squeak through with its compelling play mechanic undiluted.

I once dreamt that our own Subway Software was that hypothetical U.S. design team trying to peddle *Tetris.* It went something like this:

"Nice concept," says the president of the company. Everyone nods. "I think we can do this one." Smiles around the table. Our agent and the president discreetly retire to haggle over the price.

"Well, I'm really glad we're doing this one," says the national sales manager. You can tell the head of sales at a glance; he's always the one in the best suit. "One thing, though...that name. What does it mean? We need a name we can sell." After some give-and-take, our *Tetris* is rechristened *Cosmic Jigsaw.* The artist starts doodling up the necessary space scenes.

"The play mechanic is good," the director of product development allows, "but don't we need a few more complications? Just dropping those little pieces into place doesn't sound exciting." Everyone nods sagely. The last game the director of product development "found exciting" was spin-the-bottle, when he was ten.

A little on-the-fly redesign adds bonus objects, mutating pieces, a variable-size playfield, two-player option, smart bombs, wild-card pieces and pieces that become invisible once placed. Only Joyce Worley's impassioned plea on behalf of "artistic integrity" prevents the addition of steerable pieces and a rapid-fire mode for eliminating unwanted shapes.

"Ahhhh," says the director of marketing, "now we're really getting somewhere!" The national sales manager was whistling a happy tune.

Energized and emboldened by this vote of confidence, I lurch forward and blurt out, "How about an introductory sequence and a real victory screen!" It's decided to open with a noninteractive sequence in which a bunch of robots dig the pit into where the pieces will drop into during actual play. Winners will get a victory parade, complete with a fireworks show at the end.

"Well," I say, giving the table my dimpled smile at full voltage, "I think we can be proud of what we have done here today. The supremacy of American game design is now assured for our time." Then I wake up with the realization that, in my nightmare, we've turned the most engrossing game of the late 1980s into a piece of generic garbage. I creep down the hall to my office, fire up my Macintosh and play *Tetris* without another thought of *Cosmic Jigsaw,* until the sun rises many hours later.

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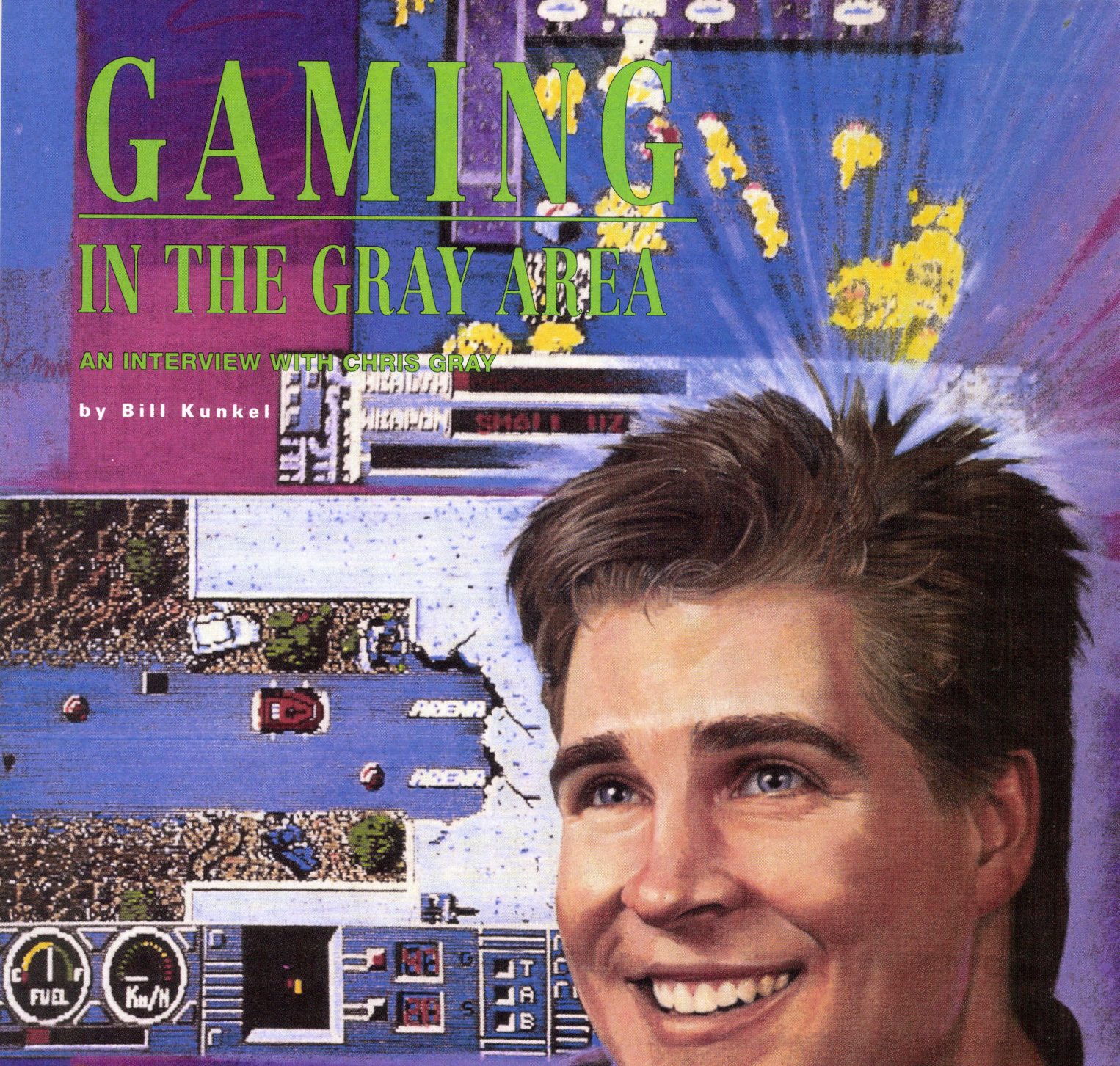
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GAMING

IN THE GRAY AREA

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRIS GRAY

by Bill Kunkel



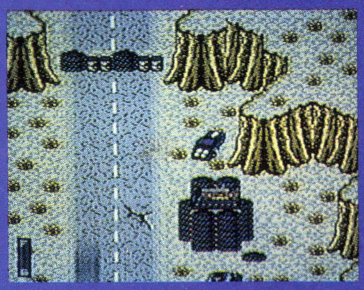
By the time Chris Gray was 15 years old, he had designed his first computer game, a moderately successful little number called *Boulder Dash*. The saga of Rockford, a hyperactive tunnel builder whose progress is constantly blocked by precariously positioned boulders, this maze-building contest went on to become one of the most popular titles in software history, spawning numerous sequels and even a coin-op arcade game in the ensuing years.

After similar fast starts, many a young designer/programmer has fallen prey to the allure of money and fast cars, never again duplicating their original success. Not so with the down-to-earth Mr. Gray, who has remained among the industry's top talents, with an enviable record of sales success. Through his development house, Gray Matter, Gray has authored such computer best-sellers as *Infiltrator*, *Road Raider*, *Techno-Cop* and *Fiendish Freddy's Big Top o' Fun.* He will soon enter the video-game arena with *Mad Max* for the NES (all published by Mindscape).

YOUNG MR. GRAY

The gaming bug first bit Gray at the age of 12 while on a trip to England with his family. "I got hooked on games like *Space Invaders,* and when we got back home I bought one of the early [Atari] VCS systems," he explained. "Then, six months later, I got a computer: an Atari 400 with 16K of memory and a membrane keyboard. I was a big game player. I read magazines like *Electronic Games*, and I wanted to write arcade games. So, I learned BASIC, and I wrote the original version of *Boulder Dash*, which I took to a small publisher [for the Atari computers] called InHome. They connected me with a programmer, Peter Liepa, who knew machine language." Gray and Liepa then collaborated on the version of the game that eventually sold to First Star Software. Liepa, who had no interest in gaming beyond this project, never again worked on an entertainment program.





Gray loves driving action, as seen in Road Raider *(top) and* Mad Max.

Unlike many designers, who initially commit their ideas to paper before sitting down to the computer, Gray created his original version of *Boulder Dash* in BASIC, which is not generally known as a game-friendly programming language. "It really only took me about a month to write *Boulder Dash*, but it was at least another year before it was actually published."

Gray next turned his attention to improving his programming skills and set out to show them off on his next project, only to run into a brick wall known as the Great Software Shakeout of '83. With the electronic-gaming industry crashing down around him, even the author of *Boulder Dash* was unable to find an American publisher for *Whirlinurd*, an arcade contest in which the protagonist is "a nerdish character who flies around mazes eating everything he can," according to Gray. *Whirlinurd* eventually sold to European publisher U.S. Gold, but has never appeared in the United States.

HYBRIDIZATION

By the time Gray's next project was ready for publication, so was the industry. *Infiltrator*, as well as everything Gray has written since then, was published by Mindscape. The game was a creative breakthrough, what Gray calls a "hybrid game": part flight simulator, part action-adventure.

In it the user is cast as Captain Johnny "Jimbo Baby" McGibbits, ace helicopter pilot and adventurer without peer. As the game begins, the player is inside the cockpit of a "Gizmo DHX-1 Attack Chopper," a state-of-the-art combat chopper equipped with an impressive array of high-tech gadgetry. After getting the feel of the copter controls, the player, as Jimbo Baby, must pilot it to the headquarters of the evil Mad Leader, who is busily plotting world dominance. Once there, the game switches to a third-person action-adventure in which the player-character moves through a series of rooms in angled side view, searching for the objects necessary to complete the mission.



Road Raider *was the first game from the Gray Matter group.*

Infiltrator was successful enough to merit a sequel, prosaically titled *Infiltrator II*, in which Jimbo Baby must once again battle the Mad Leader, who has risen phoenixlike from the ashes of his previous defeat and is once again bent on taking over the planet. The sequel offered an improved helicopter simulator, enhanced sound and graphics and three new ground missions, once more blending game genres to create an entertaining hybrid.

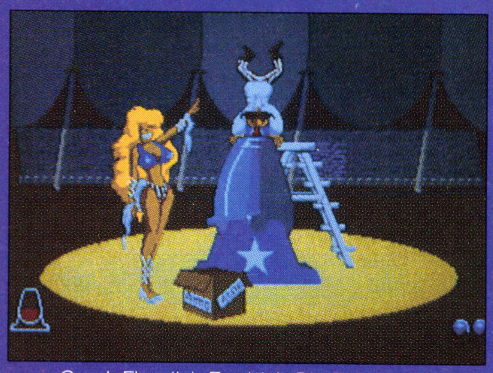
"The reason I've found [the idea of hybrid games] so compelling," Gray explains, "and perhaps this reflects my own attention span, is that I never liked games that take hours and hours to get into. That's why I never liked adventures." Gray prefers games that, to use the old arcade cliché, take a second to learn and a lifetime to master.

"They should be 'hot, simple and deep,' as I believe Trip Hawkins [president of Electronic Arts] has said. I [also] find that in the action or adventure-game environments, diverse game play is more realistic. It's just like life: When you go through life, you don't experience the same thing over and over. There's a diversity. So games should present different situations. James Bond doesn't live by his Aston-Martin alone!"

Gray continued to explore the idea of hybrid games with his next efforts, *Road Raider* and *Techno-Cop*, two games that are actually variations on a single theme: the hero who drives from one adventure location to another. In *Road Raider*, the first game credited to the Gray Matter group and the more sophisticated of the two titles, players navigate their vehicle over a multiscreen, omnidirectionally scrolling futuristic landscape. Employing a top-down display, the user can make any number of interesting stops in this decimated postwar world.

There are shops where weapons and equipment can be purchased; department stores and government buildings full of useful objects (like ammunition, first-aid kits and special auto parts that can be fitted right into the protagonist's vehicle), zombielike creatures with a lethal touch occupying the buildings; and even an arena.

When the player-character enters a location, the top-down display disappears and a new one appears. At the shops, the user selects items from the available



Gray's Fiendish Freddy's Big Top o' Fun.

menu. In the buildings, the program goes to an angled overhead view, and the user then controls the player-character on foot. Finally, if the player has discovered the elusive Arena Pass, he can enter the stadium and participate in a



Don't hit your lovely assistant in Fiendish Freddy's *knife-throwing event.*

wild and woolly demolition derby.

Techno-Cop also blends driving with on-foot action, but the car sequences use a first-person, behind-the-wheel perspective while the adventure/exploration scenes use the traditional horizontally scrolling side view seen in everything from *Super Mario Bros.* (Nintendo) to *RoboCop* (Data East).

Both games have another idea in common: While on the road it's every man for himself, and every other driver is presumed to be hostile. So, if the player encounters another motorist, the guns open and battle is begun without so much as an obscene gesture passing between the two drivers.

Though both games sold well, *Techno-Cop* clearly suffered from a tight schedule. "We cut short on the adventure element, and as a result the game [exhibits] a duality: action-adventure game or car game. The challenge is to make each part of the game symbiotic so that each scenario is made more compelling because of its relationship to the other parts."

Techno-Cop also received criticism in Europe because of its violent imagery, especially the animation in which the hero disintegrates a villain, immediately reducing him to a pair of bobbing eyeballs in a pool of blood. "We weren't trying to be controversial," says Gray modestly. "But I do have a rather morbid sense of humor."

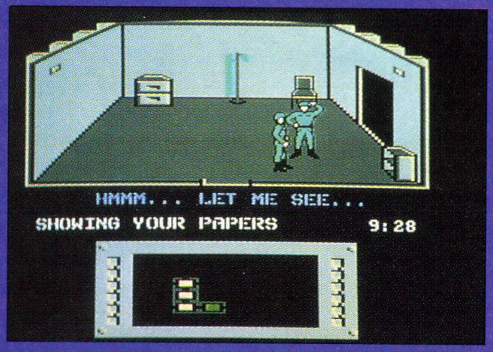
Gray Matter's most recent computer game also demonstrates this penchant for black humor. *Fiendish Freddy's Big Top o' Fun* is a multi-event arcade contest in which players participate in a series of games against the backdrop of a rather macabre circus. *Fiendish Freddy* has been well received, especially for its superb graphics, which recently garnered a "Best Graphics" award from a European software group, much to Gray's delight.

"Over the next year we're not looking to do a lot of product. We want to concentrate on low volume and high quality. We've worked with professional animators and are looking to do some big things. *Freddy* was really just the tip of the iceberg."

BACK TO VIDEO GAMES

What with Gray Matter's close association with Mindscape, a publisher with a Nintendo license, it was only a matter of time before Gray entered the dedicated video-game arena. His first NES project is a movie license, *Mad Max,* based on the adventures of Mel Gibson's *Road Warrior* character. The choice would appear to be a natural, considering Gray's past success with the driving-adventure genre.

Infiltrator *introduced the heroic "Jimbo Baby" McGibbits to the computer-game community.*



He steps out onto the video-game stage with some mixed emotions. "It's very interesting. We were just beginning to roll on the 16-bit computers, and we were looking forward to getting a chance to produce games that would entertain people to a degree that was never possible because of the digitized sound and graphics and the additional memory. But it's something of a tradeoff because Nintendo has really steamrolled the computer-entertainment business.

"On the other hand," Gray continues, "it's rewarding to work for such a wide audience. I'm not just talking about profits, but any creator wants his work to be seen by the greatest number of people.

"It's both disappointing and exciting at the same time. As developers, we're ready to move on to bigger and better things, and the

CHRIS GRAY GAMEOGRAPHY

BOULDER DASH (FIRST STAR SOFTWARE)
ACTION-STRATEGY MAZE-BUILDING GAME STARRING ROCKFORD, WHO WENT ON TO WORK IN THREE SEQUELS.

WHIRLINURD (U.S. GOLD)
A "CUTE" ARCADE-STYLE GAME PUBLISHED IN EUROPE BUT NEVER IN THE UNITED STATES.

INFILTRATOR (MINDSCAPE)
HYBRID GAME FEATURES BOTH A HELICOPTER FLIGHT SIMULATOR AND AN ON-FOOT ADVENTURE.

INFILTRATOR II (MINDSCAPE)
FURTHER ADVENTURES OF JIMBO BABY, THE WILD CHOPPER PILOT/ADVENTURER WHO MUST ONCE AGAIN BATTLE THE EVIL LEADER IN A FLIGHT SIMULATOR/ACTION-ADVENTURE.

ROAD RAIDER (MINDSCAPE)
TOP-DOWN ACTION-STRATEGY GAME BLENDS AUTO COMBAT WITH ON-FOOT ADVENTURE.

TECHNO-COP (U.S.GOLD/EPYX)
MORE VIDEO GAMELIKE, BUT OTHERWISE SIMILAR TO *ROAD RAIDER*. COMBINES A FIRST-PERSON DRIVER'S PERSPECTIVE AND A SIDE-VIEW, HORIZONTALLY SCROLLING ACTION GAME.

FIENDISH FREDDY'S BIG TOP O' FUN (MINDSCAPE)
MULTIPLE-EVENT ACTION-ARCADE GAME SET AT THE CIRCUS.

CIRCLE #148 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

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Welcome to the battlefield. You are now in command of 60 tons of high-tech firepower: The M1 Abrams™ Main Battle Tank.

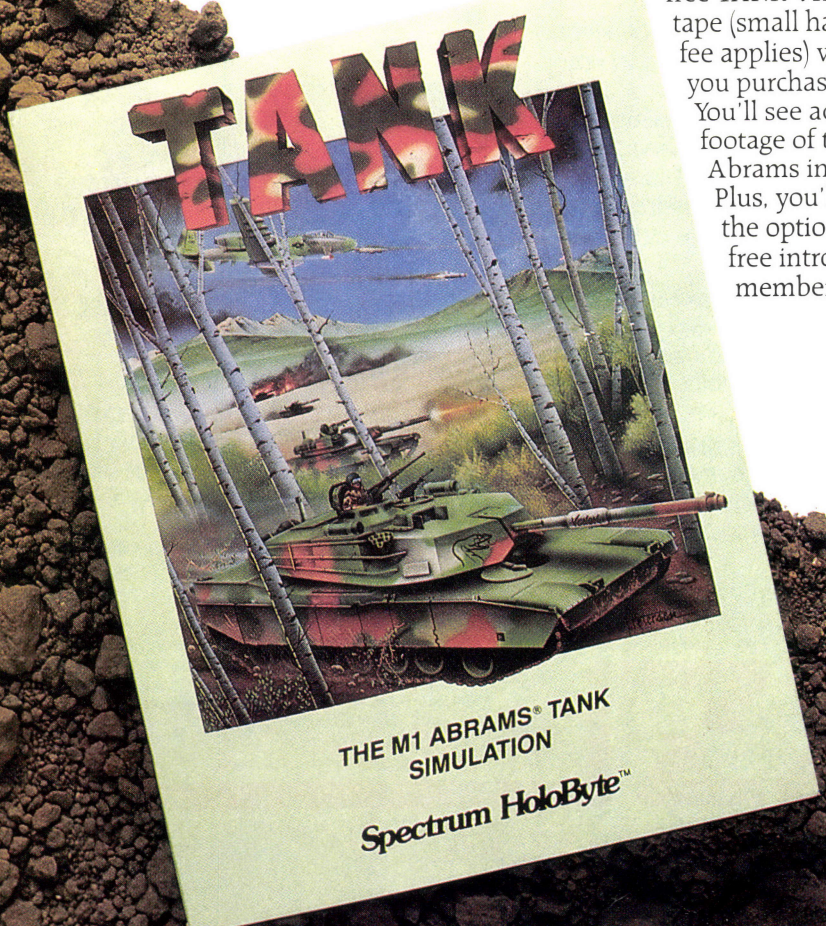
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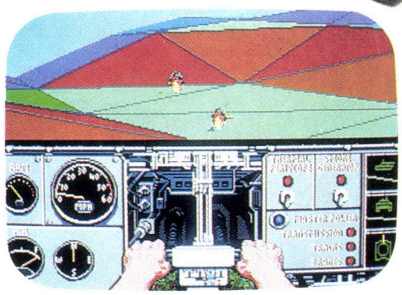
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see details

Experience the action as commander, gunner or driver while crushing through rugged landscapes at 50 mph. Peer through the darkness with the aid of thermal imaging. Pound at the armor of a Soviet T-80 tank with your sophisticated weaponry.

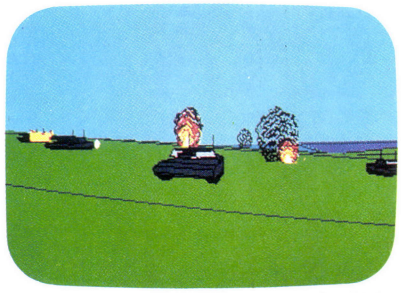
And for a limited time, you can order a free TANK VHS video tape (small handling fee applies) when you purchase TANK. You'll see actual footage of the M1 Abrams in action. Plus, you'll have the option of a free introductory membership to CompuServe,® the world's largest personal information system.

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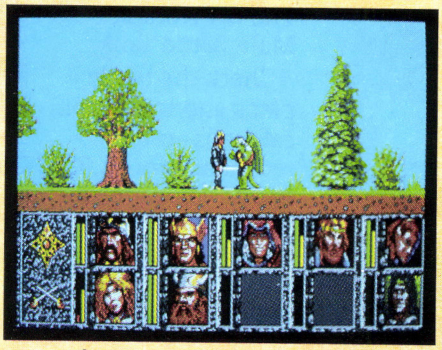
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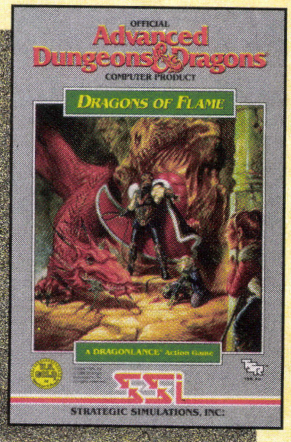
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Nintendo has definitely slowed down progress on the 16-bit computers. It's also very restrictive in terms of what you can do with sound and graphics, and the game play has to be scaled down somewhat.

"Ideally, we'd like to move from the Nintendo 8-bit to the Nintendo 16-bit [Super Famicom]. We have a lot more experience and, frankly, more creativity than a lot of the folks who are developing for the [NES]. We're waiting for the 16-bit systems, but I don't think we'll be seeing them for another year."

Mad Max, meanwhile, will employ a multi-event scenario that blends hand-to-hand action with auto action reminiscent of the film.

THE FUTURE

Like many designers and programmers who entered the business because of their love of games, Gray remains a gamer at heart. "I'm a big driving fanatic. In fact I'm waiting for my competitive-racing license now." As a result, Gray gets off on state-of-the-art coin-op auto simulators, like *Hard Drivin'* (Atari) and *Winning Run* (Namco), and wonders if a "truly realistic flight simulator" might not be able to do big business in today's arcades.

"Obviously, the gap between what arcade games can do and what 16-bit computers and video games can do is narrowing. I've even heard that some arcade games have Amigas inside them, and the version of *Altered Beast* Sega put out for its Genesis is much closer to the original than anyone would have imagined possible. Of course, computers don't have the dedicated technology that arcade machines do, but the enormous difference between today's and tomorrow's software will be in the the presentation quality: the sound and graphics presentation."

On the subject of entertainment software's "next *big* thing," i.e., CD drives for computers, Gray's enthusiasm is tempered by realism. "I don't think it will add as much to software as people think. Now, an Amiga with a CD would certainly be better: It would load much faster, and it would have better sound and music, but I think some people are being premature in announcing how wonderful [the technology] is."

Not that Gray underplays the value of graphics or sound. In fact, he feels audio is only now beginning to come into its own in computer-entertainment software. "Sound is enormously appealing. There's a lesson to be learned from movie soundtracks in how much emotion and drama a good score can add to a scene. People react to music faster than they do to anything else."

Despite all the technological improvements, Gray believes in holding to one important dictum: "People want to be entertained—and that's all you're trying to do. You can qualify that any way you want, whether it's a shoot-'em-up or a flight simulator or an adventure, but the bottom line is the same: You're just trying to entertain."

Ever since he was 15 years old, Chris Gray has been entertaining electronic gamers, and the odds are he has quite a few good years still left in him.

TOP GUNS.



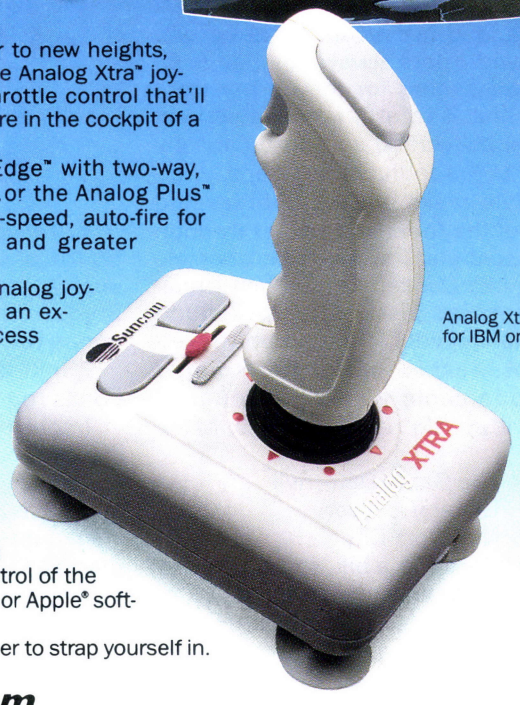
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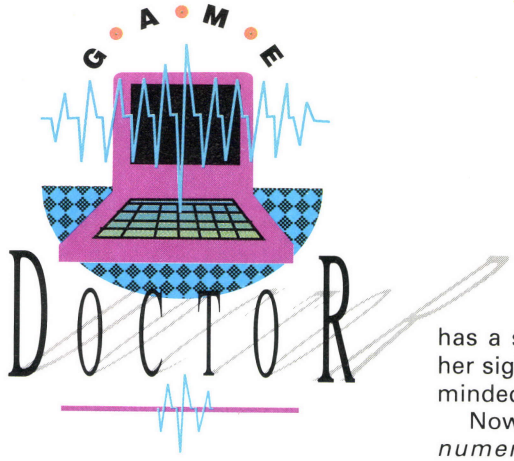


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Original art of FALCON AT, The F-16 Fighter Simulation supplied by Spectrum Halobyte.

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The Game Doctor Relates the Tales of the Maltese Vectrex

It was a rainy afternoon, typical of early New York City winter, and the mailman was already late. Nothing due but more bills, I guessed, so it wasn't that big a deal. Not much business for a Game Detective in the early winter—or any other time of year, for that matter. Except for that guy who hired me to find an Atari Lynx last Christmas, I hadn't had a paying gig in almost a year. My game receptionist hadn't been paid in six months, and her nylons were becoming frayed. There always seemed to be a crowd waiting for me on my front stoop: the landlord, process servers and bill collectors, so I automatically tensed at the sound of footsteps.

I could make out the approaching figure of the footsteps' owner through the frosted-glass in my front door. He looked like *Donkey Kong*. Then I realized that was just a mail sack slung over his shoulder. The flap on my letter slot creaked open and a single envelope came wafting through. I picked it up. No return address. Made out to:

The Game Detective
General Delivery
New York City

Didn't look like a bill, so I slit it open and took out the folded-up piece of loose-leaf inside. The message was short and sweet, and my eyes got as wide as a *Pac-Man* power pill when I read it:

Deer Game Detecdiv,

I can get Vectrex games. Anything. 3-D, even some previously not releeced stuff. If you write me back, I will tell you where to get them. THIS IS NOT A JOKE!!

Under the message was a name: "The Fat Kid" and a phone number with a New Jersey area code. The news hit me like a tenth-level boss! I was on the phone in an instant, playing the touch-tone keys like a PC numeric cluster. The first call was to Carl, a wealthy but crooked coin-op collector from Cambridge.

"Hey, Carl, what's shaking?"

"Your hands, unless I miss my guess. What are you bothering me about, gumshoe?"

"Still number ten on the vanity board of life, aren't we, Carl? Well, unplug your new *Hard Drivin'* Sitdown Model for a minute, 'cause you're gonna want to hear this."

"Spill the tokens, peeper, I've got bonus rounds to ace!"

I said the word—"Vectrex"—then stepped back, metaphorically, for the reaction. The gasp at the other end of the line followed an instant later. Then I laid it on—thick. Maybe a little thicker than I should have, but I couldn't help it: I wanted to hear this slug beg.

"A new source," I reported coolly. He's got everything. Even 3-D. Even...," a beat, "...previously unreleased materials."

He was gasping now, not even trying to hide his salivating lust for the Holy Grail of Gamedom. The very word, "Vectrex," was like a gong to the ears of the gaming cognoscente. Although this early '80s game system from GCE, which eschewed raster-scan graphics in favor of vector technology, was not a sales blockbuster when first released, it developed a tremendous cult in the years after its demise.

Since being discontinued by Milton Bradley in the mid-'80s, the legend of the Vectrex grew, with rumors and hints of rumors leading owners and wannabee owners on prolonged chases through the gaming demimonde. Once a Vectrex user thinks he or she has a source of Vectrexania in his or her sights, they are relentlessly single-minded in pursuit of that source.

Now I'd hooked perhaps the world's *numero uno* Vectrexian. I couldn't have cut him loose with a knife!

"Why don't I come over and, maybe...take a look?" He was pleading with me.

"Not now, Carl. I have some business to attend to first, but when I'm ready to deal, you'd better be there."

"I'll be right here," he promised.

I believed him; I was wondering if he'd even leave the phone long enough to visit the bathroom. Then I heard a crash in my front office. I brushed Carl off and hung up the phone. With an easy, practiced motion, I flipped off the light switch and removed my Sega Light Phaser from its cumbersome shoulder holster. Then I heard the voice: "Say good night, peeper!" and felt the business end of a U-FORCE slap up against the base of my skull.

Everything faded to black, and I took a quick trip to the world of dream sequences. Music was playing in the distance, and I saw a young couple playing a Vectrex. But this couldn't be real, I reasoned; the game was in color and not color from some plastic overlay, either, but real, vibrant color.

"Sit down, Game Detective," the high-pitched voice commanded.

I turned and saw a small, bloated child sitting on an overstuffed divan, sipping a mixture of cranberry juice and lemonade.

"Yes, as you have no doubt deduced, I am the Fat Kid. This is my...associate, Mario."

There was something familiar about the Fat Kid's gunsel, with his painter's outfit and handlebar mustache, but somehow I just couldn't place him. He glared sullenly at me for a moment, then picked up a mushroom and started snacking on it.

"You have come here, no doubt, because of... the Maltese Vectrex?"

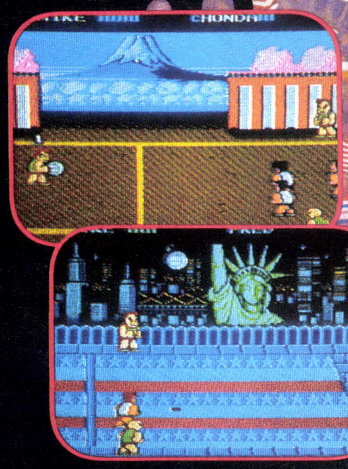
"The Maltese Vectrex?"

"Yes. It is not widely known, but a copy of the original system was taken to the Isle of Malta by Professor Nolan

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Bear, one of the world's most brilliant computer scientists. He was so impressed by the system that he set about to improve it. He added color filters, sound boards, even a special holographic 3-D system that eliminates the need for viewing spectacles. In short—he created the ultimate Vectrex system!"

"And you own this system?"

He smiled a sick-looking grimace and nodded. Mario giggled obscenely. "Yes," said the Fat Kid, "I own it. It seems that Professor Bear met with an...unfortunate accident." Again, Mario giggled. "I am also prepared to sell it; I presume you have a buyer?"

"Sure," I shrugged. "Money's no object."



"My dear Game Detective," the Fat Kid whined, nodding conspiratorially to Mario, "money is always the object. Hahahahahaha!"

I was briefly aware that Mario was standing behind me, and I turned to face him. He had something on his right hand as he rushed at me—a Power Glove! Too late, I attempted to deflect the blow, but he caught me with a grazing shot to the chin, and I crumpled like the Apple II entertainment market.

When I eventually awoke, I was in the waiting room of my office, the letter from the Fat Kid still clutched tightly in my hand. Instantly, I was on the phone, punching in the number. My heart stopped for a second when I heard the familiar, high-pitched voice on the other end of the line.

"Hello?"

"Are you the Fat Kid?" I demanded without preamble.

A pause. "N-n-no. I d-don't know what you're talking about. My parents aren't home!"

"You're the kid—I know your voice!" I insisted. "You're the one with the Maltese Vectrex!"

"No!" he whined. "I never spoke to you before! You're crazy!"

Click.

I tried several more times over the next week to make contact with him, but after several preemptive hang-ups, I started getting a recorded message to the effect that the number had been changed. The Vectrex source was gone, never to be heard from again.

Well, maybe it didn't happen exactly like that....

In fact, this entire business started when a couple of readers independently assured me that they had access to Vectrex materials. In response, I mentioned it briefly in this column several months ago. And then it all hit the fan. To date, somewhere in the area of 75 readers have requested additional information, many of them including self-addressed envelopes with their requests. My only problem? The two sources totally disappeared. I have written several pleading missives to each of them and even promised one a copy of the *Electronic Games* Buyer's Guide he needed to complete his collection. This particular source was especially frustrating since one of his letters mentioned that he had actually enclosed a list of Vectrex sources with that very missive! Needless to say, a search of the envelope produced no such list.

Well, the old Game Doc can be a bulldog when he has to be, and I'm not giving up. There may not be a Maltese Vectrex, but I'm convinced there are sources for software and, perhaps, even repairs. For the nonce, however, I'm going to answer the many readers who have requested more information about this unique and memorable game system.

The Vectrex was originally created as a means to exploit GCE's purchase of a large number of vector-graphic monitors from the Orient. Its uniqueness was both a blessing and a curse. A blessing because there was nothing else remotely like it in the home universe. The Vectrex was obviously far more successful in duplicating vector coin-ops, like *Star Castle* and the other Cinematronics arcade classics, than the existing raster-scan-based units.

The system's line drawing look and crystalline simplicity were ideal for the development of 3-D games; the Vectrex 3-D games were, in fact, the finest such products in the field until Sega introduced its lens-shutter technology for the SMS. The Vectrex's singular

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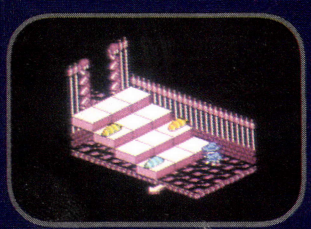
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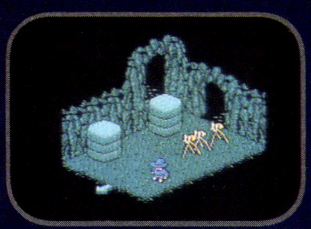
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nature was a curse, however, in that vector-graphics games could not be played on raster-scan monitors (i.e., TV sets). Users, therefore, had to not only commit themselves to a new video-game system but to a monitor as well. Moreover, while raster technology could mimic vector graphics (as seen in games like *Echelon* and *Starglider*), the reverse was not true. As a result, certain genres of games (maze chases, cutesy contests, etc.) were never satisfactorily translated to the Vectrex.

Eventually, GCE sold the system to Milton Bradley, a veteran of the stand-alone scene, and it was soon thereafter discontinued in the wake of the video-game shakeout of '84. Mini-arcade stand-alone systems like Milton Bradley's Microvision (a hand-held system that physically resembled Mattel's Blockbuster and used slot-in game cartridges that fit over the Microvision screen), Entex's Adventure Vision (a tabletop system with a fairly large screen and cartridge-based software), Coleco's tabletop arcade translations and GCE's Vectrex were quite popular in 1982-83. The pendulum now seems to be swinging back in the same direction. Witness the sudden appearance of Nintendo's Game Boy, the Atari/Epyx Lynx and the hotly anticipated stand-alone from NEC (TurboGrafx-compatible). Clearly, this popular gaming format is once again coming into its own.

Now, before we run out of room, how about a few quick questions?

question

I think I've got some good ideas for games. Who should I see?

—Cody Scott
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

answer

Sorry to be the one to break this to you, Cody, but no matter how good your ideas are, they are unlikely to be sold—as ideas. In fact, most publishers will not look at any "game ideas" that are not accompanied by a proposal and basic specs. Ideas, you see, are a dime a dozen; cheaper in some states. It's the execution of those ideas that makes it something worth paying cold cash for.

Moreover, one of the concepts you submit might unwittingly overlap with a project that publisher already has in motion. For that reason, publishers will generally refuse to even listen to all those "great ideas" that are floating around outside the industry, lest they be accused of ripping off someone's brilliant concept.

Now, if you've gone beyond the "idea" stage and have actually worked out a design for these games, the question of who to show them to seems rather obvious: You show them to publishers. But you've got to be a self-starter in these things, Cody. Remember, there are plenty of folks out there with lots of "good ideas." I know, because I get letters from about 50 of them a month. It's the one who beats the bushes and pays the dues who will succeed.

Another option is to seek out a development house and ask to be taken on in an entry-level position. Whether it's answering the phone or opening the mail, as long as you are working in an apprentice relationship, the dues you pay will ultimately be worth it. Good luck, Cody!

question

I own an Amiga 500, an NES (of course) and an Atari 5200. In my opinion, my Atari 5200 could whip most any game machine out there (except those new 16-bit systems—I'm going to have to get one of those!) and come close to [beating] some computers! What happened to the 5200?

—Aaron Pickering
Signal Mountain, Tennessee

answer

The 5200 had several problems: The joysticks were terrible—non-centering and easy to break—and the numerous keypad buttons made even simple games hopelessly confusing. But its big problem was its position in the Atari line, between the old 2600 and the announced 7800. Since players knew the 7800 was coming, they passed on the 5200. Moreover, the period of the great gaming "shakeout" was just beginning, and the industry's economic underpinnings were coming undone.

The 5200 had its strengths—incredible versions of games like *Dig Dug*, *Joust* and *Baseball* as I recall—but its weaknesses doomed it.

BY THE WAY, GANG...Starting next issue, a special "*Game Doctor* Prize Packet" will be awarded to readers who ask the most intelligent, provocative questions. These packets are not of any great intrinsic value—merely souvenirs and trinkets from trade shows and expos the Doc has attended over the years—but they should certainly make interesting keepsakes, and you can take pride in knowing that these buttons, caps, key chains, etc., couldn't be purchased at any price, since they were intended as industry giveaways.

So put on those thinking caps, folks, and send me questions: ***The Game Doctor*, c/o 330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107.** Remember: The *Game Doctor* Prize Packets are on the way!

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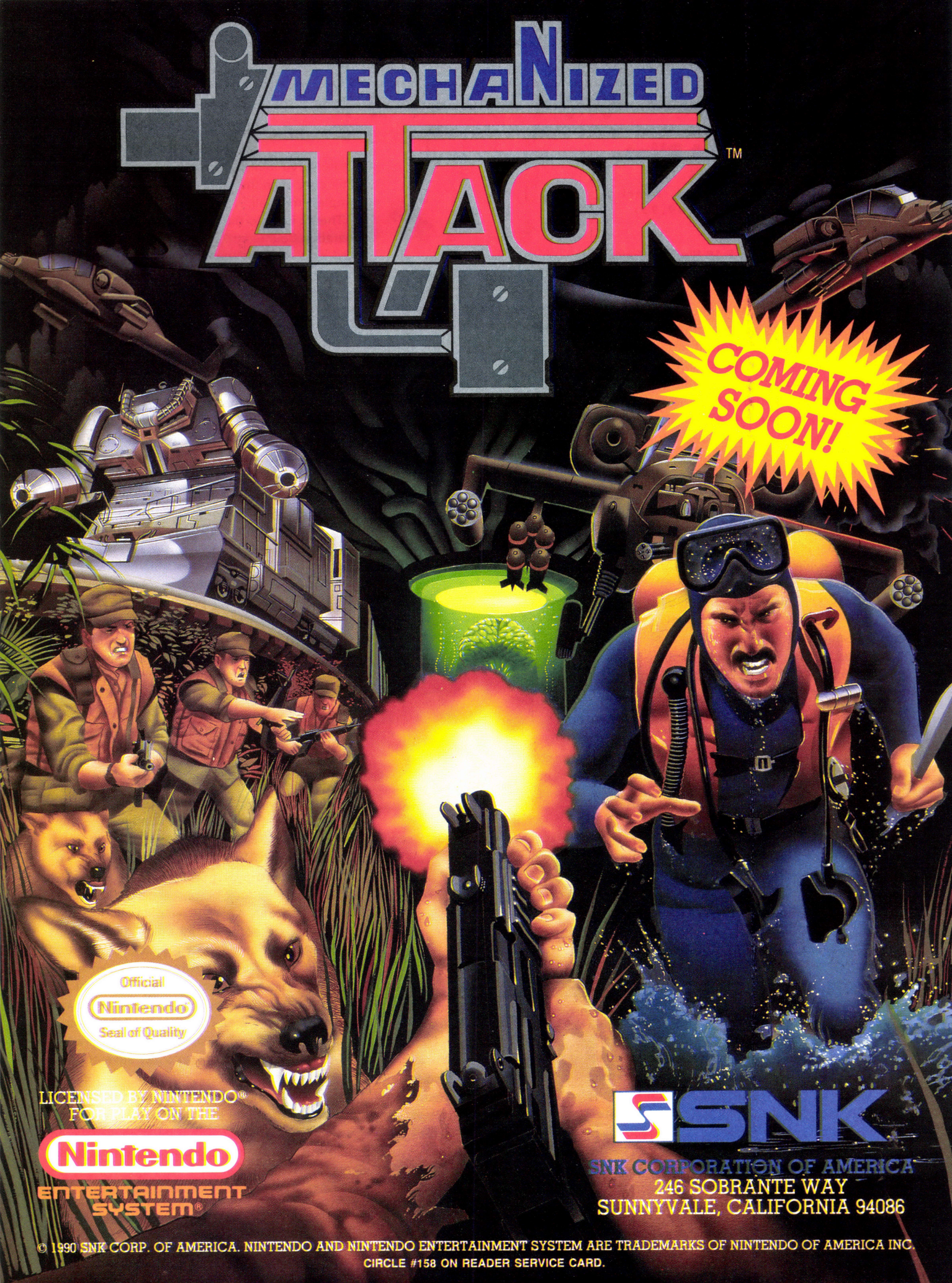
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CIRCLE #158 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

F/16 Combat Pilot

ELECTRONIC ARTS

Versions: Amiga ($49.95), Atari ST ($49.95), IBM PC ($49.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	7
Graphics	7
Playability	6
Overall	6

The F-16 Fighting Falcon is one of the most powerful aircraft in the skies today. Its sleek build and powerful punch make it good for both air-to-air and air-to-ground combat missions, and it has found its way into the air forces of many nations. Thus it's not surprising that the F-16 is the topic of more than one air-combat simulator program. Not to be left out, publishing megaforce Electronic Arts has added Digital Integration, Inc.'s *F/16 Combat Pilot* to their growing line of vehicle simulators.

Play begins in the squadron crew room, and the player can choose any of the several available game areas from here. Quickstart is an abbreviated form of the program that allows the impatient pilot to jump right into the game, while Demonstration is just that, an automated display of a series of computer-piloted missions that show the capabilities of the program.

The player can also view background information for the various enemy aircraft and friendly weaponry in the game as well as load a saved game, load or create a new pilot and change the controls used during the game in other options. The final option, Missions, takes the player to the game itself. Missions makes available six different scenarios, one training mission and a head-to-head playing option.

To enter the training area, the player enrolls in the Tactical Fighter Training Squadron, a kind of simulator within a simulator. Here the player practices takeoffs, landings or any of the five frontline missions to become practiced at the necessary skills without lowering his overall win-loss ratio.

Of the six available missions, five are considered "frontline," and one of each must be completed before the player can advance to the final mission, which combines elements of each into one long campaign. Scramble features air-to-air interception; Watchtower is a typical photo-reconnaissance mission; Tankbuster puts the focus on battlefield close-air support; Hammerblow is a series of offensive counterair operations; and Deepstrike covers interdictory strike missions. Each of these missions requires different skills, and it takes a bit of time for even the most experienced jet jockey to complete them all.

Then it is on to the most difficult mission of all: Operation Counterstrike. No longer limited to unrelated single operations, each mission now affects the flow of the ground war and determines what the pilot's next action should be. The player's craft is also augmented with several other F-16s that can strike at the enemy.

The aspect of qualifying for later levels is a good idea, but, unfortunately, the reward in this game is really not worth all the effort. While controlling an entire campaign should be enjoyable, it can become tedious, especially since the drone pilots are unreliable. Most missions must be carried out by the player himself.

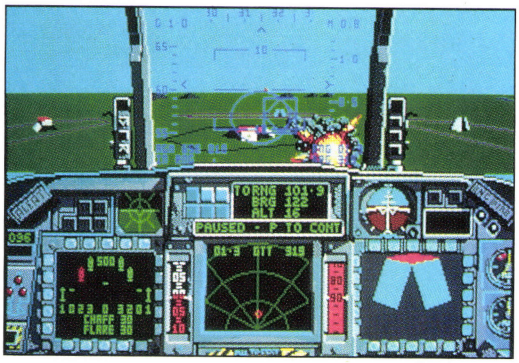
The head-to-head option is a nice feature. Any two computers running the game can be connected by either modem or a null-modem cable. This should make it easier to find an opponent, since the machines don't need to be the same. (An Amiga could fly against an Atari ST, for example.)

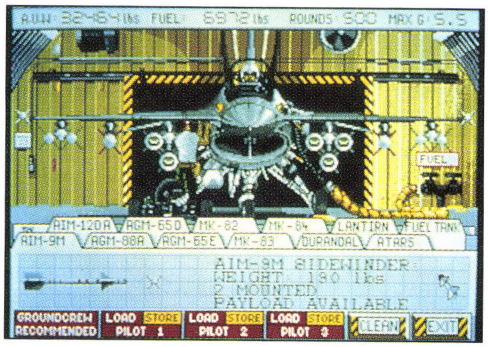
The game's graphics are a mixed bag. The interior of the F-16 is highly detailed, but the outside graphics are basically simple geometric shapes. Although they look nice, they fall short of what's been done in other flight simulators.

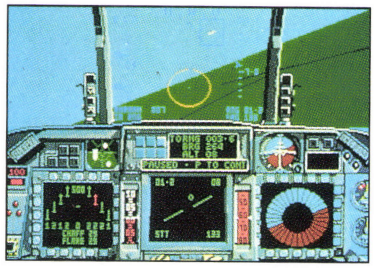
The main screen features the typical out-the-cockpit view found in most flight simulators. The dashboard has three displays, each of which can be set to view any of the eight different functions built into the F-16. The upper part of the screen contains the view out the window, complete with a standard Head-Up Display (HUD), but this information can be hidden if the player prefers a clear view. The player can also look out either side or over the tail to visually scan his surroundings during play.

The player controls the plane during flight through a combination of joystick, mouse and keyboard input. Ambidextrous players can simultaneously use two joysticks; one to control roll and pitch and the other to control the thrust and rudder. Flying the plane is fairly straightforward, but the controls are often sluggish during play. It is sometimes necessary to press a key several times before it will register.

The 40-page manual included explains most of the games' functions and available options, but many things were left out that must be discovered through trial and error. The original European version supposedly had a good 100-page manual; it's too bad that EA decided to edit out so much of this material.







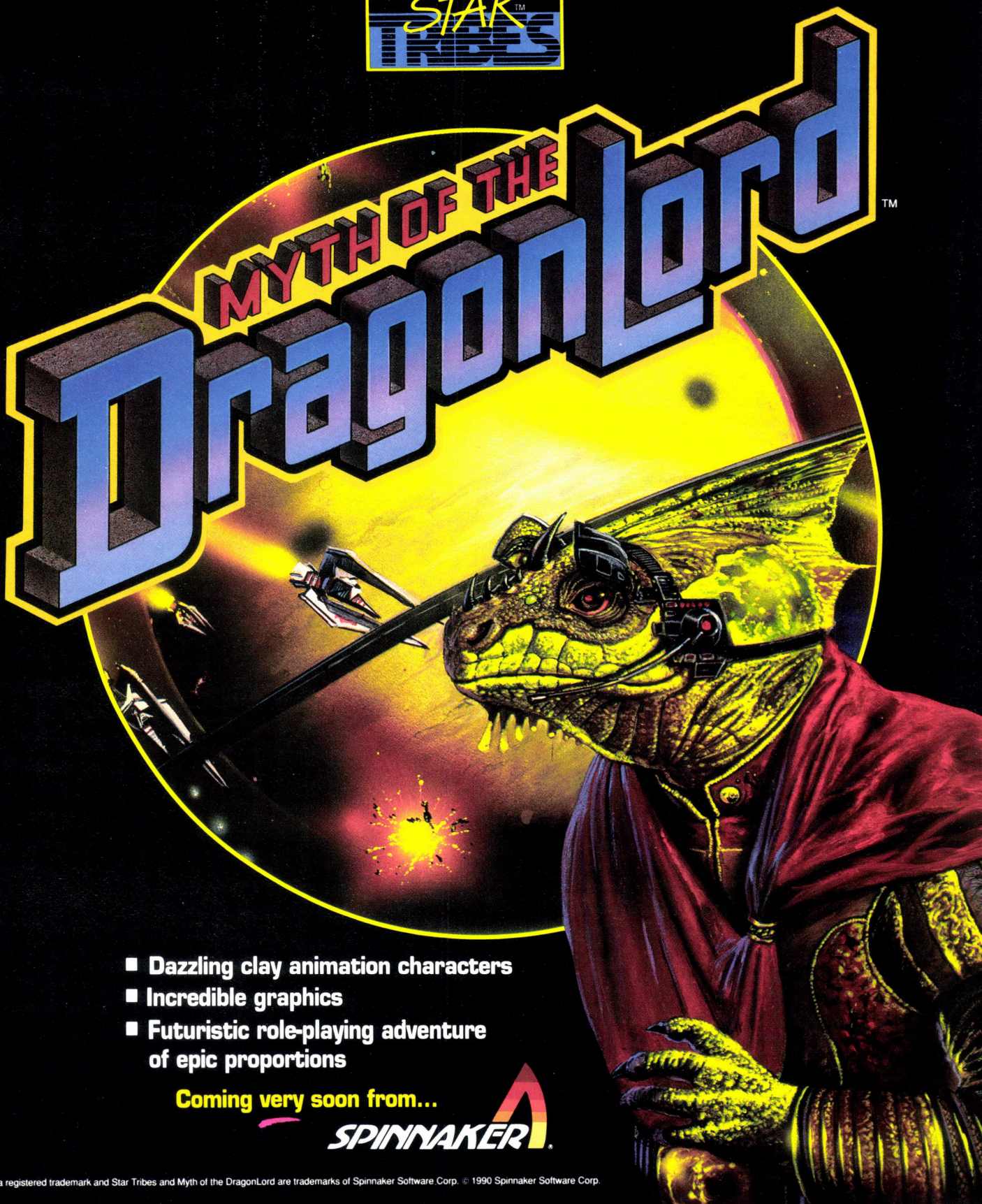
It's not surprising that the F-16 is the focus of more than one flight simulator, the latest being EA's *F/16 Combat Pilot*.

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F-16 Combat Pilot is a fairly detailed flight simulator. A lot of this detail leads to problems that may keep some players away. While part of this is due to the complexity of flying any airplane, some of the problems are simply in the program's implementation. Because of this complexity, *F/16* is a game that players will either love or hate. Those who are easily frustrated will probably give up before mastering the game, while those who are persistent and truly love flight simulators should have a good time.

—R. Bradley Andrews

Electronic Arts
1820 Gateway Drive
San Mateo, CA 94404
(415) 571-7171

Blue Angels

ACCOLADE

Version: IBM PC ($49.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	5
Graphics	7
Playability	7
Overall	7

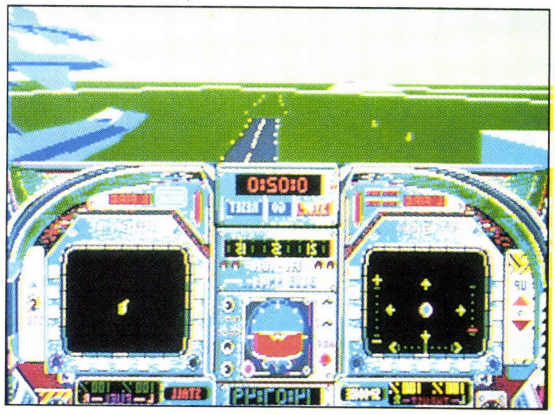
Even if you're fed up with flight simulators and have lost interest in licensed games, Accolade's *Blue Angels* may still be worth checking out. Inspired by the U.S. Navy's elite corps of formation flyers first seen by the public in 1946, *Blue Angels* allows users to climb into the cockpit of a state-of-the-art aerobatic dream machine, learn and execute complex flight maneuvers, try them out in formation with the world's greatest fly-boys, then sit back and watch the display from any of several vantage points.

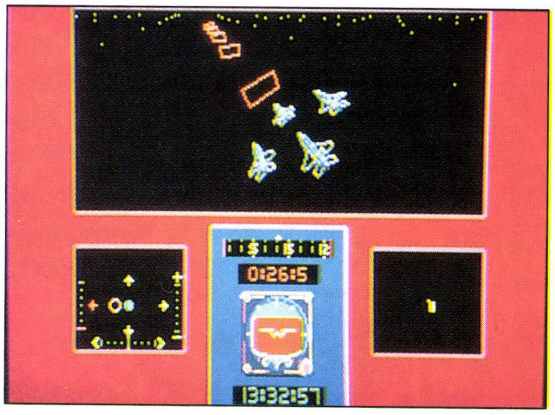
Blue Angels is for users who revel in the exhilaration of simulated flight and get excited executing precision maneuvers and mastering the nuances of jet flight. If, however, your idea of the perfect flight simulator is the one with the most weapons and the most enemy aircraft to blow up with them, then *Blue Angels* will seem a rather tame exercise. The four F/A-18 Hornet jets available to the user don't even have guns and, even if they did, shooting down your fellow Angels is just not the way to win friends and advance in rank.

For those workstation pilots who aren't ready to fly with the Angels from the get-go, *Blue Angels* offers extensive tutorials to help the user get airborne. The 25 authentic Blue Angel maneuvers (with exotic-sounding names like the 8-point roll, Split-S and Delta 6 plane cross) incorporated into this simulation are taught through a series of graduated flying aids. Users learn the overall flight path for each maneuver with the help of a 3-D wireframe simulator that guides the plane, which is seen from an outside-the-aircraft perspective, through a string of rectangles. Next, the user gets into the cockpit and attempts to execute the same maneuver, then watches as his or her actual flight path is plotted in 3-D alongside the optimal path.

Maneuvers are flown in either real-time or stop-time (in which the user can stop time at any point), then observed in instant replay with the margin of error tabulated by the computer after each attempt.

Ultimately, once players master a maneuver, they can fly it with the Angels themselves. After a sufficient training period, the user can even participate in an air show without creating a conflagration. There are three kind of air shows: High, Low and Flat. Each consists of a different set and sequence of maneuvers.





Up in the air, junior birdmen, and master the art of aerobatics in Accolade's *Blue Angels*.

The polygon-fill graphics, while good, are not state-of-the-art. This is somewhat compensated for by the diversity of viewpoints available to the user. Each flight maneuver can be seen and replayed from several perspectives: cockpit, grandstands, observation balloon or chase plane. Sound effects are minimal, but the digitized speech heard periodically inside the cockpit is excellent.

Blue Angels is one of those programs that players will instantly respond to with either intense interest or complete indifference. For members of the former persuasion, this program will not disappoint. Authors Rick Banks and Paul Butler included every possible element of aerobatic simulation in their design, and programmers Robin Burgener, Phil Armstrong and Steve Tibbett did a solid job of realizing that vision.

—Bill Kunkel

Accolade
550 S. Winchester Blvd.
San Jose, CA 95128
(800) 245-7744

Their Finest Hour: The Battle of Britain

LUCASFILM

Versions: Amiga ($59.95), Atari ST ($59.95), IBM ($59.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	8
Graphics	9
Playability	10
Overall	9

It's Summer 1940. England's skies are filled with the low, menacing hum of the Nazi war machine as the Luftwaffe, under the guidance of Hermann Göring, commence an all-or-nothing campaign for air superiority of the English Channel. This was a critical moment in the history of World War II. Had Germany succeeded in paving

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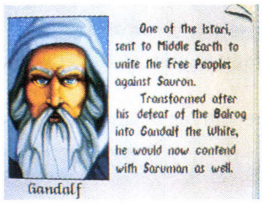
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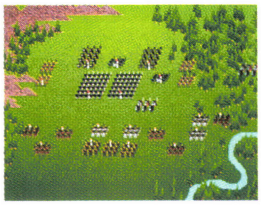
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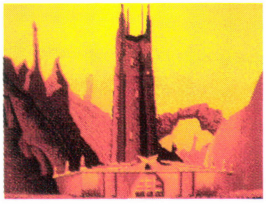
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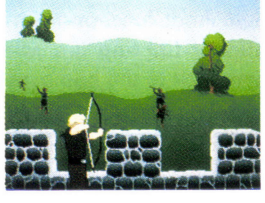
Actual IBM screens











System Requirements: IBM PC, true IBM compatibles. DOS 2.1 or higher. 512K RAM, MCGA, VGA, EGA or Tandy graphics card. 5.25" and 3.5" disks available. Amiga and Atari STE. Mouse optional. Ad Lib card support.

The program is published with the cooperation of the Tolkien Estate and their publishers, George Allen & Unwin (Publishers) Ltd. The plot of Riders of Rohan, the characters of the Hobbits, and the other characters from the Lord of the Rings are copyright George Allen & Unwin (Publishers) Ltd 1966, 1974, 1979, 1981. All brand names and trademarks are the property of their respective holders. Spinnaker is a registered trademark of the Spinnaker Software Corporation. ©1990 Spinnaker Software Corp.

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the way for Operation Sea Lion, the planned invasion of the British Isles, it's quite possible that the United States would have negotiated a separate peace with Hitler. At minimum, the war would have continued much longer, without England as a forward staging area for operations against the European mainland.

"Never have so few given so much to so many...this was their finest hour."—Sir Winston Churchill

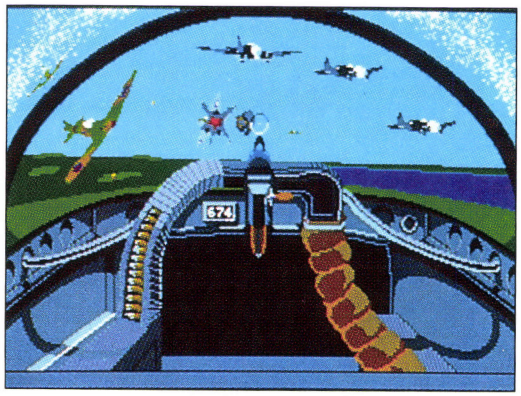
Lucasfilm has provided players an outstanding vehicle to become one of the few. *Their Finest Hour: The Battle of Britain* is far more than a sequel to the enormously popular *Battlehawks 1942*; it's yet another revolution in truly innovative WWII aerial-combat simulation. Instead of being limited to one of several capsule engagements, players may also build custom engagements or participate in the grand campaign directing either the Royal Air Force or the Luftwaffe.

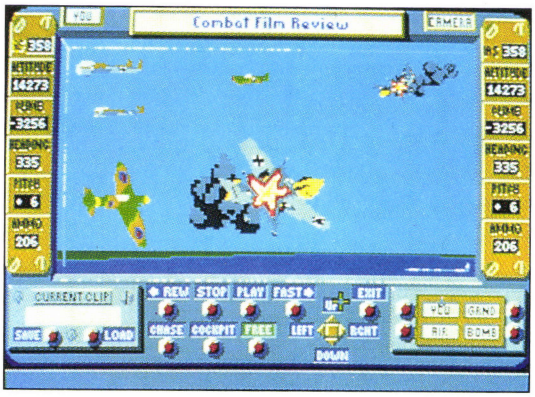
Luftwaffe commanders organize flight groups, plot up to five movement way points for each group, assign targets and coordinate fighter escort. Target types include British radar-defense facilities, airfields, factories, naval yards and ship convoys.

Attacks on each of these types of targets have varied affects on the continued ability of the British to resist. For example, eliminating radar facilities reduces British response time for subsequent raids, thereby allowing flight groups to get closer to their targets before being intercepted by fighters. Destruction of factories reduces the rate at which squadrons receive replacement aircraft, and so on. Germany wins by gaining air superiority by September 16, the historical start date for Operation Sea Lion.

Once a mission is plotted, players jump in the cockpit as the flight group leader or wingman for the first formation plotted. German players may fly one of the following types of aircraft: Messerschmitt 109 fighter, 110 fighter/bomber, Junkers 87 (Stuka), Junkers 88, Dornier 17 (Flying Pencil) or Heinkel III (The Spade). British players fly either the Hawker Hurricane or one of the two models of Spitfires available at the time.

All aircraft cockpits, flight controls and maneuvering characteristics have been faithfully re-created. Two-seat fighters allow players to control the aftergun as before, but with some definite improvements. The autopilot function is available to keep the plane from flying into the ground while fending off those pesky enemy fighters, or the autoshoot function may be used to keep the rear gunner fighting the war while making the final approach to the bomb release point. For the heavy bombers, players may act as either gunner at any of the turret hard points, pilot or bombardier or switch back and forth as often as desired. Autopilot and autoshoot functions are also available for each type of heavy bomber.







***Their Finest Hour: The Battle of Britain*, by Lucasfilm, takes you on a tour of one of WWII's pivotal conflicts.**

Another major improvement involves the manner in which crews perform. Pilot/bomber crew rosters are maintained until the individuals concerned are captured or killed in action. Consequently, if a player has built up a good fighter pilot, he can take charge of a bomber crew, assign that pilot to bomber escort duty and expect the pilot to perform with roughly the same degree of success as if he were still flying the aircraft! Battles can only be described as Hollywood-style "Technicolor Spectaculars."

Finally, the famous replay camera option has been upgraded. Players can save the combat films of their favorite missions and replay them with VCR-type controls including freeze frame, fast forward and rewind. Furthermore, films may be viewed from any of the following perspectives: cockpit, chase mode (behind piloted aircraft), free-floating eye in the sky, ground-target perspective, from any object in the air (barrage balloons, friendly or enemy aircraft, pilots who have parachuted) and even from the noses of bombs dropped. Reviewing footage of previous missions is often as exhilarating as flying them.

The Battle of Britain was an epic struggle in every sense of the phrase, and it is only fitting that Lucasfilm developed an epic game to honor it. This reviewer once said that "*Battlehawks 1942* is the finest WWII aerial simulator to date." A new day has dawned, and *Their Finest Hour* leapfrogs over all the rest.

—H. E. Dille

Lucasfilm
c/o Electronics Arts Distribution
1810 Gateway Dr.
San Mateo, CA 94404
(415) 571-7171

Hero's Quest

SIERRA
Versions: Atari ST ($59.95), IBM PC ($59.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	9
Graphics	8
Playability	8
Overall	8

Sierra On-Line's new adventure game, *Hero's Quest*, is a successful blending of their popular animated-adventure format, with new role-playing features. The result is an entertainment with all the charm and verve of the company's previous *Quest* lines and a tongue-in-cheek brand of humor that keeps the program lively.

To start the game, the player creates either a

continued on page 118

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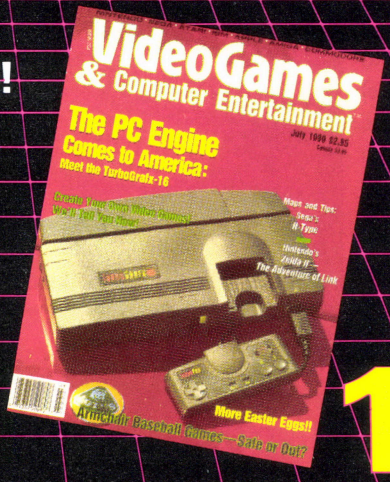
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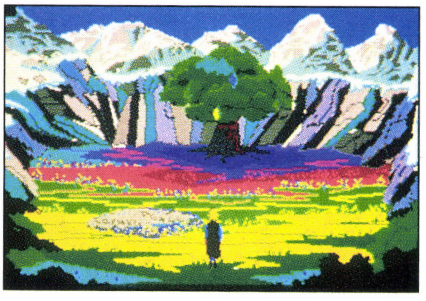
continued from page 114

fighter, magic user or thief. Each class has minimum statistics in 13 different abilities that can be increased by allocating 100 skill points. It is possible to give a character abilities not usually associated with his/her class, such as spell-casting for fighters, but this costs extra points.

Once character construction is complete, the action begins. The story is set in the Alpine town of Spielburg. The character, a recent graduate of the Famous Adventurer's Correspondence School, must prove himself a hero by besting a local band of bandits and rescuing the local nobility. Along the way, the would-be hero must deal with goblins, kobolds, trolls, ogres and the Witch Baba Yaga. Assistance is found in the town, at a nearby castle and in the local healer's hut. Several mysteries can only be solved by questioning the locals. This plot, although admittedly unoriginal, is spiced with good humor and several very amusing and unexpected twists.

***Hero's Quest* is a dose of Sierra On-Line questing at its very best.**





Hero's Quest features a strong interface. The game understands most typed commands and has single-key shortcuts for 25 common commands. Unfortunately, if a player tries to use a device in the wrong location, the game sometimes responds, "Could you rephrase that?" Character movement can be controlled using keyboard or joystick, but a mouse is the preferred method since this allows a player to click on interesting items to get more information.

The graphics are everything one would expect in a Sierra game, and the animation is smooth. The game supports Hercules and PC Junior monitors, but a higher quality system gets the full animation out of each scene (watching a flight of geese reflected in the water, for instance).

Combat animation is at the same time the game's biggest triumph and most singular disappointment. The player gets an over-the-shoulder view of the fight and watches combatants parry, dodge and strike. Unfortunately, there is a lag time between when a command is issued and when it is executed, even on a 20 MHz system. At 4.7 MHz, the problem is heightened and combat crawls.

The game's soundtrack includes over a hundred songs, themes and sound effects. *Hero's Quest* supports a variety of audio cards: the Roland LAPC-1 (MT-32), Ad Lib, IMF, CMS, Casio MT-540/CT-460, Casio CSM-1 and Yamaha FB-01, in addition to the standard internal speaker. The sound can be switched off for late-night playing, but be forewarned that the game concludes with a loud fanfare that might cause trouble for midnight adventurers.

For convenience, the box contains ten 5.25" and four 3.5" disks. Though the game can be played off these floppies, a hard drive with 2.6 megabytes of free space for the game is recommended.

All Sierra entertainment programs have high replay value, because it is possible to "win" and only score (for example) 300 out of 500 possible points. Any player who wants a full score has to start over and hunt for the missing points. *Hero's Quest* takes this replayability a step further by allowing the player to choose the role of fighter, thief or magic user. The victory conditions are different for each, and there are even several solutions to some of the puzzles, depending on the character's skills. Best of all, successful characters can be saved to disk for reuse in upcoming sequels.

Hero's Quest is especially rewarding for gamers with fast machines and EGA or VGA monitors. This is one quest that's certain to put a smile on the adventurer's face.

—Alan Roberts

Sierra On-Line
P. O. Box 485
Coarsegold, CA 93614
(209) 683-4468

ABC Monday Night Football

DATA EAST

Versions: Commodore 64 ($39.95), IBM PC ($49.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	9
Graphics	7
Playability	8
Overall	8

Scott Orr has done it again with the versatile *ABC Monday Night Football*.

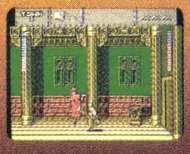


While there have been no shortage of football simulations for computerists, new versions of gridiron combat are generally sold on the basis of frills and graphics. It sometimes seems as if American users are more interested in the quality of the halftime show than how well the game executes on-field action. It has, in fact, been the curse of football simulations that the most realistic games are often extremely difficult to play. The more accurate the simulation, the more difficult it is to control a team of 11 men simultaneously moving and interacting with 11 enemy players, all intimately involved in the action.

Scott Orr has been pursuing the perfect football simulation for almost a decade. He pioneered the genre with *Starbowl Football* (Gamestar) in 1981, then fine-tuned the concept with *On-Field Football* (Gamestar) a few years later. He attempted an on-the-field visual presentation in *GFL Championship Football* (Gamestar) and now has made his definitive statement on the subject (at least for this year) with *ABC Monday Night*

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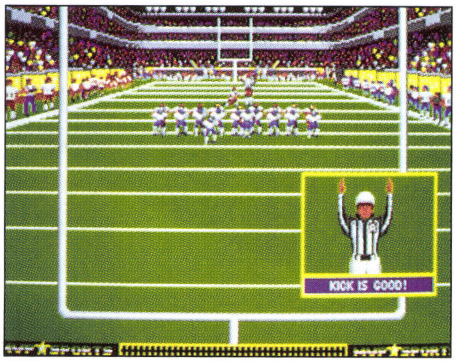
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CIRCLE #147 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

Football. Designed by Orr (under his own Season Ticket imprint) and developed by Michael Knox and Troy Lyndon's Park Place Production team, *ABC MNF* offers users, in addition to the obligatory bells and whistles, a brilliant new game interface that both simplifies and sophisticates the playing process.





This isn't to give short shrift to the bells and whistles, which are duly impressive, especially the software-based speech synthesis on the IBM PC version we tested. When *MNF*'s Frank Gifford appears, for example, we hear his familiar voice welcoming us to the proceedings. When a flag is thrown, a whistle blows and the appropriate official appears in a pop-up window to announce the nature of the infraction. Injuries are announced in similar fashion.

The graphics employ what has become the standard viewpoint in modern pigskin simulations: The players are seen from above and behind while the field itself is seen in straight top-down perspective. This mixing of perspectives has a disturbing, if subtle, effect. While the players are in realistic perspective and are animated as if they are moving into the screen, the field and worse, the ball move up and down. There are some other difficulties as well. The switch in camera views from the quarterback to a potential receiver is so abrupt that the user may not be aware it has even occurred.

ABC MNF offers a wide range of player options, including playmaker, quarter length, team modification, interface and new quit-and-save game commands. Available plays appear in two sets (offense and defense) of three windows. Moving the joystick or arrow keys changes the available sets.

Where *ABC MNF* shines, however, is in the intelligence of its interface. Here's how it works: When the ball is snapped, the quarterback is under the offensive coach's direct joystick/keyboard/keypad control. A series of helmet icons appear in a horizontal strip along the bottom of the screen, representing the halfback, fullback, left wideout, tight end and right wideout (in that order). Pressing the joystick button (or keyboard command key) allows the user to cycle through those icons in order to select a receiver. The logic of this system is almost flawless: The time required to cycle from one receiver to another represents the amount of time that player would require to run their pass pattern and get open. There is just one exception: Why is the tight end sandwiched between the left wide receiver and right wide receiver when he should precede both of them? Not only does this seem incorrect in terms of the tight end, but it makes hitting the right wide receiver considerably more difficult than hitting the left flanker, since the user must cycle through not one, but two additional icons.

This interface idea is somewhat less successful in defensive terms, since logically there should not be a delay in assigning control over one defensive player as opposed to another. The icons should cycle much more quickly on defense, since it's extremely difficult to reassign control on the fly. Even with these problems, however, the play experience on defense is still satisfying.

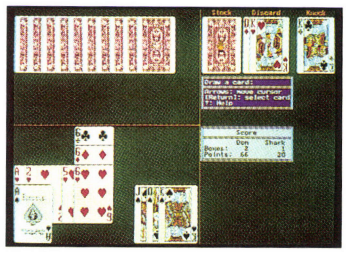
On offense, however, *ABC MNF* offers a solid presentation and at least one breakthrough idea that significantly improves the play experience. Once again, Scott Orr proves that no one has a better handle on simulating on-the-gridiron action than he does.

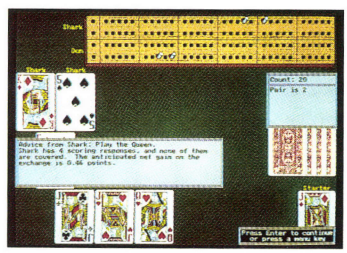
—B. K.

Data East
1850 Little Orchard St.
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(408) 286-7074

Above: A slice of the action from Data East's *ABC Monday Night Football*.

Below: A more passive, but still challenging entry is what you'll discover with Software Toolworks' intricate *Cribbage King/Gin King*.





Cribbage King/Gin King

SOFTWARE TOOLWORKS

Versions: Amiga ($59.95), Apple IIGS ($59.95), IBM PC ($59.95), Macintosh ($59.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	7
Graphics	9
Playability	8
Overall	8

The programmers for Software Toolworks attained a coup in this package of two of the most popular card games of all time.

Legitimately played card games, from solitaire to stud poker, only depend on the luck of the draw initially. Then skills in observation and gauging the law of probability take over. Psychology and personal insights are important in games between two players or more. Until now, translating a card game to the computer venue meant that that kind of personalized card sense ran up against impersonal, machinelike random selection.

That limitation has now been removed. Software Toolworks' *Cribbage King/Gin King* offers seven different opponents, each with different overall playing styles and strength levels: from Alfie, who knows the rules but no strategy, to Shark, who remembers every card taken and discarded and is aware both of the relative scores and the probability of almost any combination.

The default opponent when either game is loaded is Mrs. Bass, rated tops only below

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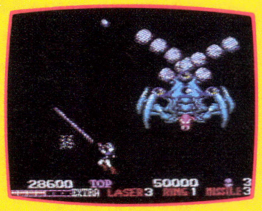
無頼戦士



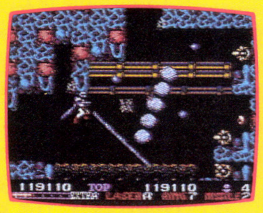
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Shark, and Shark is appointed tutor, prepared to offer advice whenever asked. All the on-board opponents can act as tutors, although there's not much point in bothering with Alfie. Each personality has something to offer, but it's recommended that beginners start out by playing with Chesley and looking to him for help. Chesley is only rated next above Alfie, but in both gin and cribbage, his recommendations should be the first undertaken by any player.

Other options for students of the game are full disclosure of the opponent's hand, so that the player may follow his or her reasoning, and a duplicate mode, in which cards dealt in a previous game are dealt again in the same order to see how different players handle them. There are also demo modes, in which the computer runs through sample games against the human gamer, or computer players may be set against each other to see how their relative strengths affect the game. These computer games run a bit faster than a novice might be able to follow, but judicious use of the Hold key comes in handy.

Help is always available: advice from the chosen tutor and context-sensitive help on rules at the touch of the **?** key. The **F1** key produces menus to change opponents, enter a name, ask for a redeal of the same cards last played or a selection of chosen cards and a menu to disable the sound and special visual effects (such as shuffling the cards and animated peg movements on the cribbage board). Printouts are available of either the final scores and statistics or complete records of each game. The wrap-up scores are always shown on-screen at the end of the game.

Separate manuals for cribbage and gin each give complete details of all the options and rules, plus variations and how to access them. A brief history of each game is also included. There are descriptions of each of the computer personalities and their approaches to game play too.

A graphics card is required on IBMs and compatibles. The presentation is excellent in both games, even in standard CGA color mode, but the Tandy 1000 series 16-color mode is not supported. Software Toolworks made a special deal with the U.S. Playing Card Company to use its trademarked Bicycle backs, face cards and ace of spades designs. On a CGA system, these are more suggested than reproduced, but still familiar.

In cribbage, a board with animated scoring pegs appears across the top of the screen. In gin, in which players are dealt ten cards and may hold as many as 12, a neat option allows for personal preferences in the arrangement of the cards. The default is a rank-by-suit matrix, running clubs, diamonds, hearts and spades from top to bottom and ranks left to right from ace (low card in either game) to king. The alternates are sorted by rank, by suit or by melds (though this last option is not available in a tournament game).

Tournament game play "for the record" is available for both games. In this mode, no advice may be asked for, and opponents cannot be switched. Upon completion, the gamer's personal playing history is updated and maintained on disk. The full record of wins and losses with statistics is available for any number of human tournament players, as long as different names are used.

Cribbage King/Gin King comes with a miniature pack of genuine Bicycle-back playing cards and a portable, folding cribbage board. Also included is a sense of enthusiasm and pride in an accomplishment well done. Enjoy!

—Ross Chamberlain

Software Toolworks
13557 Ventura Blvd.
Sherman Oaks, CA 91423
(818) 885-9000

Shadow of the Beast

PSYGNOSIS

Versions: Amiga ($49.95), Atari ST ($49.95), Commodore 64 ($39.95)

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	8
Graphics	8
Playability	6
Overall	7

Shadow of the Beast, Psygnosis' latest arcade-style game, employs the same scrolling playfield found in many of their titles but with easily the best implementation so far. The design and programming is by Martin Edmundson and Paul Howarth of Reflections, the same British group which did *Ballistix*, another Psygnosis title.

Superb and eerie graphics are a trademark of all Psygnosis software, and *Shadow of the Beast* is no different.

The objective of the game echoes many other software entertainments: to exact revenge on some unseen force for wrongs done to the player-character. In this case, the gamer's goatlike character is searching a faraway planet, attempting to find his former masters, the Beast-Mages. He seeks revenge for their forcing him to kill his father. The course of this pursuit takes the gamer across and underneath the surface of the planet, gaining artifacts along the way to aid him. Of course, the Beast-Mages have left guards and traps to impede the player's progress.





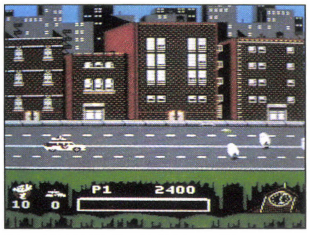
While the storyline of Beast is a little thin, the breathtaking graphics make up for this deficiency. The backgrounds scroll on several levels, with objects passing behind one another, accurately conveying the sense of three-dimensional space. When running along the plain, for example, the horizon scrolls at a slower rate than the objects in the foreground. The characters are all well drawn and animated, adding to the sense of reality.

The music in

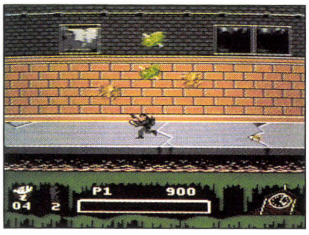


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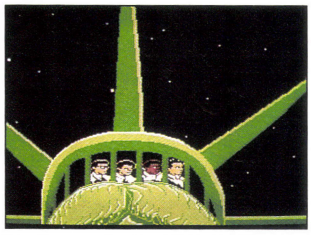
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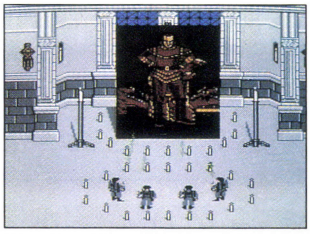
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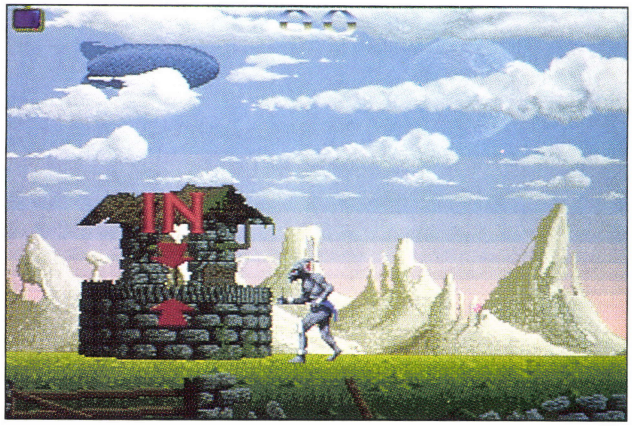
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Many of the locations and creatures you come across in *Shadow of the Beast* will bring recollections of the horrifying movie, *Alien*.

Beast is equally impressive. The score was composed by David Whittaker on a Korg M1, a professional music workstation. The sounds were then converted to a digitized format for use in the game. The score is reminiscent of a good science fiction/adventure soundtrack, with various themes and subthemes emerging at different points throughout the game. The sound effects are just as good, drawing the player further into the game, enhancing the overall effect.

Unfortunately, although the graphics and sound are first-rate, the actual game play of *Beast* is rather stale. The game emphasizes repetitive hacking and slashing over creative puzzle solving. After you've beaten a creature once, you can beat all others of the same type with the same method. Similarly, many of the guards look different, but they all employ the same attack method and may be defeated easily.

One major complaint is that the game has no scoring function. The only way to measure progress is by how much of the game the player can survive, not how many points are racked up. Another problem is that the character starts the game with 12 life points to last throughout the contest. There are potions that replenish the player's life points, but the total figure can never be more than 12.

Shadow of the Beast is a visually and aurally impressive game. Although it doesn't break any new ground where actual game play is concerned, many gamers will be won over by the breathtaking graphics. It's a fantastic demo of the art and sound capabilities of the Amiga and Atari ST computers.

—Michael Holda

Psygnosis
2150 Executive Drive
Addison, IL 60101
(708) 620-4444

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade—The Graphic Adventure

LUCASFILM

Versions: Amiga ($39.95), Atari ST ($39.95), IBM ($39.95), Macintosh ($39.95), Commodore 64 ($29.95

RATINGS:	
Sound/Music	8
Graphics	8
Playability	8
Overall	8

The latest in the Indiana Jones series from Lucasfilm Games is an adventure game based on the third and final movie. *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade—The Graphic Adventure* uses the technology developed for two of

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CIRCLE #152 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

Lucasfilm's other popular games, *Maniac Mansion* and *Zak McKracken*, to let players control Indy and his father in their search for the Holy Grail; the cup Jesus drank from at the Last Supper.

Henry Jones searched for the Grail for many years. Just before reaching it, Nazis kidnapped him to obtain the holy cup and plan to use the religious artifact to extend Hitler's evil rule for a millennium.

The story begins with Indy's return to his college after one of his treasure-hunting adventures. After dealing with a crowd of angry students, he must gather up some necessary items from his office and his father's ransacked house, then head off to Venice on the first leg of his adventure. Indy must then search the catacombs under that city and find the ancient tomb that holds a vital key to the location of the sacred Grail.

After that it is on to the halls of Schloss Brunwald, where his father is captive. Once Henry is rescued, father and son spend a bit of time in the city of Berlin, then flee Germany in a zeppelin on their way to the Grail temple. The most crafty players are able to avoid all of the Nazi guards along the way, but most people need a combination of fists and wits to make it through this sequence.

The greatest challenge is yet to come. Indy must pass the three "trials of cunning" that protect the Grail itself. After recovering the cup, Indy must allow his father to drink from it to restore him to full health. The specific ending sequence depends on Indy's exact actions during this phase.

***Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade—The Graphic Adventure* is easy to play, putting all the commands you'll need at your fingertips.**

While the player controls Indy during most of the game, some sequences are faced by Henry as he does his part to aid in the action. Also interspersed throughout the game are short graphic sequences to provide necessary background material and fill the player in on activities out of his direct scope.

Lucasfilm's interface is completely mouse-driven. All commands are entered by clicking on the appropriate words to select the desired option. A wide variety of orders can be constructed, ranging from the plain to the sarcastic or even to the downright infuriating, well in line with Indy's sharp tongue.

The ultimate challenge is to make it through the entire game without any combat. But for those with less creativity or patience, the ability to fight is always available with every hostile encounter. The player can jab, punch and dodge during his attempt to pummel an opponent into submission.

The player's score is quoted as an Indy quotient, or "I.Q. points." The more ingenious and clever the solution to a problem, the more points the player obtains. It is even possible for the clever player to do better in the various game situations than Indy did in the actual movie.

While seeing the movie may add to a player's appreciation of the game's subtlety, this is not required. Familiarity with the movie is not a detriment either, since enough new twists and turns are included to make it enjoyable for even the veteran moviegoer.

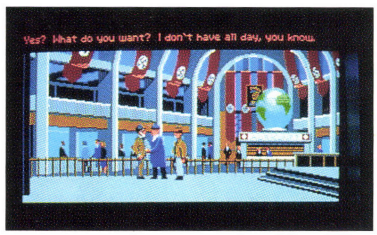
The game graphics are well done and effectively capture the feel of the movie. Three-dimensional cutaway views are drawn for each of the many areas Indy and his father pass through, and the on-screen character animation is very smooth. The upper section is used for most of the action during the game, while the bottom area is used to display the various options available to the player. Background sound is appropriate to the location at hand. It is also of limited duration, which prevents annoyance caused by listening to any one sound track for extended periods of time.

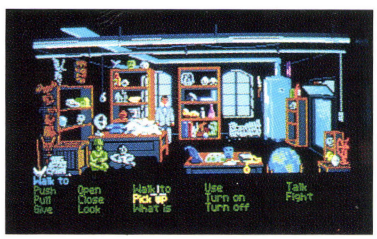
Interesting documentation is included with the manual. In addition to the usual short rule book, there's a 40-page Grail diary that contains many of the notes Henry made in his long quest for the Grail. This diary provides interesting background material as well as information the player will need to successfully guide Indy.

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade—The Graphic Adventure is a well-thought-out and enjoyable rendition of the exciting movie that thrilled so many people. The point-and-click interface eliminates the "guess the word" problems encountered in many other adventure games while keeping available a wide range of potential actions for our hero. This is one game every adventure fan should get.

—R. B. A.

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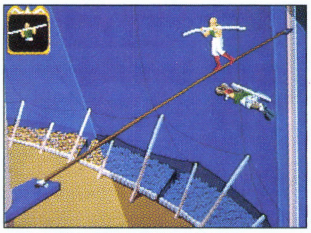
COMPUTER STRATEGIES

Be a Star in Fiendish Freddy's Big Top o' Fun

MINDSCAPE

Versions: Amiga, Atari ST, IBM PC

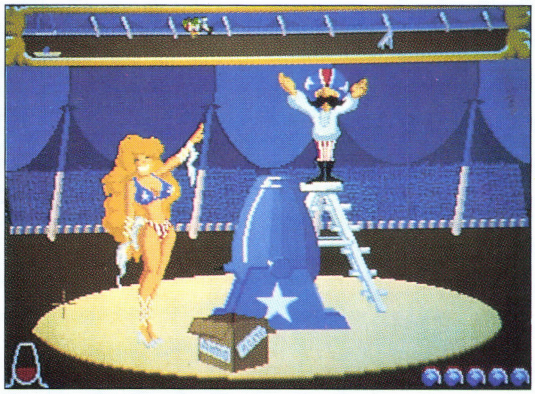
Mindscape's circus challenge puts the player in a pickle when he/she becomes owner of the famous Big Top. It seems the bank wants the balance of their loan by tonight, or they're going to repossess everything and turn your beloved Big Top into a sea of blacktop. To make matters worse, they've sent Fiendish Freddy over to make sure the circus doesn't have a good night. So, with the stage set, gamers must now compete in six events to try to raise $10,000 in order to appease the bank and save the circus.



Phenomenal Feats of Diving Daring

The key to this first event is a steady rhythm and knowledge of the eight stunts. Start by observing the first stunt to be performed in the upper-left corner. Keep page seven of the instruction manual nearby, and note which direction that stunt is on the joystick.

Once Horace is airborne, move the stick in an even left-and-right motion while watching to make sure he is continually rotating. It's not speed that works here, but a smooth rhythm. If he is jerky or lopsided in his spin, the rhythm will be off. Once the bell rings, quickly press the button and push the stick in the necessary direction to execute the required stunt. Once the first trick is done correctly, the display changes in the upper left. Note this new stunt's stick direction, and immediately begin the left-right motion again. It's important to execute the trick immediately after the bell rings, because Freddy will appear and blow Horace off-target if you delay too long.



The final thing to keep an eye on here is the target indicator that shows Horace's position relative to the water. If a player's rhythm is off or Freddy appears to blow Horace off-target, the red X veers off the mark. Compensate quickly by pressing the stick in the direction needed to correct the situation. Once done, immediately return to the left-right rhythm.

Genuine Juggling Genius

Juggling is a bit tricky, especially if one tries to follow the strategy in the instruction booklet. The secret to a successful career at juggling is to get things out of the clown's hands as quickly as possible. Start by positioning the juggler so that his left hand is up and his right hand is down. This is done by pressing the stick right while firing. Next, catch the first object in the juggler's right hand. Once the seal tosses the next item, wait until it arcs at the top of its journey, then press the stick right and hit the button. This will simultaneously switch the object to the other hand and toss it up. It's important not to toss any object upward as the seal is throwing something up. This would result in two objects coming down at the same time. If this occurs, try to catch the objects in both hands and quickly press the stick left then right while holding the fire button. Doing this twice will toss both things up, one after the other.

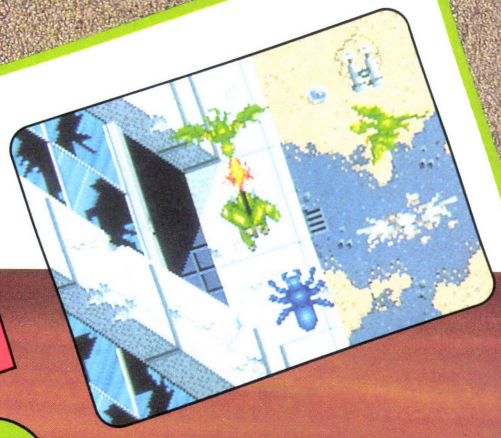
The other thing to watch out for is Freddy. He will toss in either a bomb or a rocket sometime during a round. If it's a bomb, catch it in the left hand and immediately press the stick forward while hitting fire to get rid of it. If the rocket appears, players must juggle it until the end of the round. Should this happen, be careful and remember to drop anything but the rocket, or it's curtains for poor Jeffy-Joe.

Breathtaking Bravado at Hairy Heights

The trapeze is a pretty straightforward event in which timing is everything. There are just two things to keep in mind while swinging along. The first is to always release from a trapeze when Finola is coming upward in her swing toward the next trapeze. Doing so in the first second or two of her ascent will gain her the most forward momentum toward the next trapeze and launch her slightly upward as she travels so that she can safely pass through the rings of fire.

The second thing to keep in mind is never release unless the other trapeze is coming toward Finola. Don't be in a rush. Although Freddy will appear if players take too long,

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there is ample breathing room for a gamer to take his/her time and wait until the far trapeze is coming at Finola as she swings towards it.

Dangerous Daggers of Death

In this event, players must throw daggers to burst balloons while avoiding stabbing the lovely Knancy Knife. The strategy is more one of timing than anything else. Note that the balloons appear in only four different distances from the center point. Try to align on one of these distances at a time, and throw until all balloons at that distance are popped. If Freddy appears, wait until he throws his bomb, so the explosion will not throw off your aim.

Remember, timing is everything. Try to lead the balloons by about 1 inch when throwing. (This lead time may have to be adjusted according to the system the game is played on and can only be mastered with practice.) The important thing is to avoid hitting Knancy at all costs, as this will both cost the player two throws and lower the judge's score.

Tense Travel Techniques on Tightrope

The tightrope is one of the easier events for racking up big dollars. Start by holding the stick forward, and use the upper-left and upper-right controls to balance the pole while moving along. The secret here is to straighten the stick the instant it begins to veer, since any substantial delay results in a fall.

Freddy appears after Round One to attempt to knock the walker off the rope with a thrown saw blade. Although he flies by often in Round Two, keep in mind that he throws a blade only on his third pass. To block a blade, try to have the stick as straight as possible when Freddy launches it. Once done, immediately release the stick, and press fire to deflect the steel. Be ready to quickly balance Tony Tiptoe afterward, as this daring feat often causes him to veer.

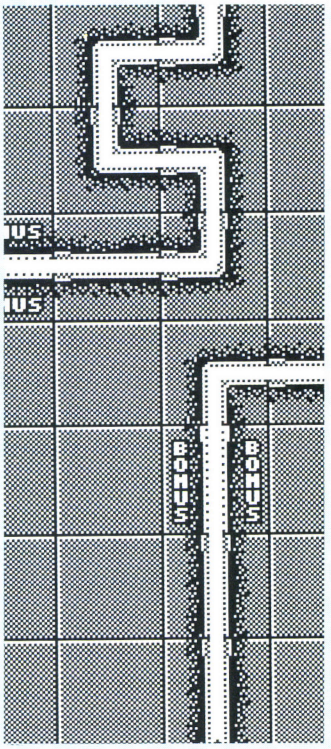
Combustible Cannons of Courage.

This is the simplest event to execute, yet it's quite difficult to master. Start by observing the amount of gunpowder lovely Lisa places in the cannon. This is the key to judging where Fernando will fall. There are four amounts that will consequently launch Fernando to four different locations within the Big Top.

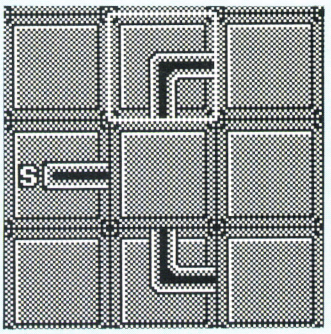
For example, if the cannon is only slightly loaded, place the net in the closest section to catch Fernando as he lands. Try to release the cannon at a 45-degree angle every time. Although it may seem important to be able to move the cannon to various angles, using only one will give players a reference for exactly where Fernando will land with each blast.

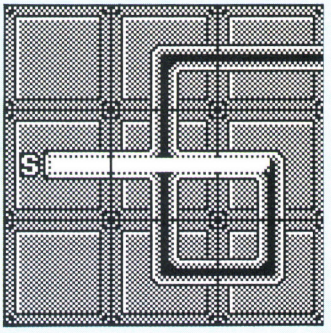
Once players see where a certain shot will land the human cannonball, continuing to release at a 45-degree angle will ensure that the next time the same amount of powder is used, Fernando will land in the same spot once again. Memorizing these four landing zones can result in fewer "headaches" for our fearless friend.

—Frank Tetro, Jr.



To do well in *Pipe Dream*, you must recognize where pieces should be placed so that they offer the most benefit.





Fluid Pipe Laying in a Pipe Dream

LUCASFILM GAMES

Versions: Amiga, Atari ST, Commodore 64, IBM, Macintosh

The flooz is loose! The runaway liquid threatens to flood the entire city, and it's up to the player to stop it. As they lay the pipeline, gamers must use careful strategy to keep the flooz flowing as long as possible. Once the first city block is saved, players continue on through 36 increasingly cunning levels.

The secret to *Pipe Dream* is a cool head and sharp wits. Start by quickly examining where the starting point is located. Try to visualize the pipeline as it should appear so as to take as much of the field as possible. Next, look at the pieces in the hopper, and see how they would fit into the scheme. If the next piece in line does not fit in the next space, try to "see" where it could go for use at a later time. Don't waste too much time thinking about this—the flooz is flowing fast. Concentrate on staying as far ahead of the flow as possible by laying the normal straight and curved pipe.

As soon as you get a little breathing room, use the crossover pipes as much as possible. Flooz that crosses over itself is worth 500 points instead of the usual 50 points for a normal flow. This is the single-best way to earn a high score in this game.

The other bonus that can push your score up substantially involves crossover pieces also. If you flow the flooz through five or more crosses, you'll earn an extra—and sizable—bonus. This is hard for novice players, but after a while you'll see patterns of pipes in the bin and be able to visualize configurations that will turn into high-scoring layouts.

Eventually, a few pieces appear that may temporarily confuse the player; they won't seem to fit anywhere in the scheme of things. Don't panic. Here is where a key decision must be made. Players can place the pieces off to the side in an area they feel may be used later. This is a good option only if the pieces can be interconnected so that it will be easy to hook to them later on. Make this decision wisely: Unused pieces cost the player 100 points each when a round ends. This can prove devastating to an otherwise respectable score.

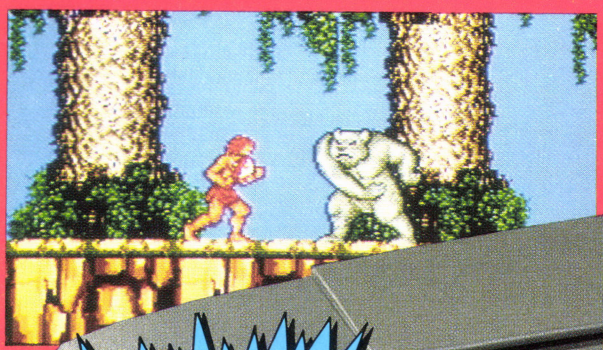
The other option depends on where the distance meter is. If the meter shows that the pieces already on-screen are enough to complete the minimum flow requirement, hit the flow button to end the round instead of haphazardly placing the unwanted pieces. This can be a key move because instead of losing points, players get double points for all pieces the flooz flows through after the flow key is pressed. (No matter what position the flooz flow is in, even if it's a fraction of an inch from the end of a run, use the flow button to finish the flow. All of your bonuses will double also!)

After the first few levels are complete, a bonus round allows the player to increase

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his/her score. Here, place the pieces in any connecting fashion without concern for crossovers or long strategies. There is simply not enough time. Instead, just drop together the pieces that connect, and quickly dump the useless pieces off to the side.

After the bonus round, the levels feature new twists such as obstacles or reservoirs. Try to avoid the obstacles by building the pipeline around them. The reservoirs are very important for two reasons. One is that they will buy the player extra time, since the flooz takes time to fill them. The other is that they are worth 500 points if the flooz passes through them. Head for them whenever possible.

Other items to look out for are the one-way and bonus pipes. Watch out when laying the one-way pipes. Flooz must pass through them in the direction of the arrow, otherwise the round ends when the flow hits the pipe. Bonus pipes are worth extra points if the flooz passes through them.

Finally, when a level begins, scan the borders for openings in the walls. These openings allow the flooz to pass through one side and appear on the other. This can be key when space on one side is running out!

—F.T., Jr.

Doing Well at Welltris

SPECTRUM HOLOBYTE

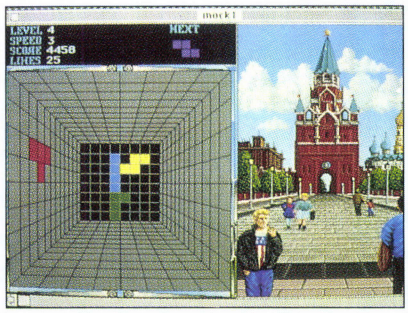
Versions: IBM, Macintosh

The latest Soviet challenge adds some twists to its popular predecessor, *Tetris*. In *Welltris*, players maneuver geometric shapes along the four walls of a well in an effort to form complete lines at the base. Game play continues until players either block all four walls or one wall is stacked to the top with pieces.

The best way for beginners to get a jump on *Welltris* is by learning the pieces and how to use them. Start off by looking at the diagram in the booklet to get a feel for the types of pieces likely to fall in the level chosen. Keep in mind that these pieces can be rotated a full 360 degrees so each can fit into different spots depending on its position. Try to picture in your mind the types of situations each piece is appropriate for so they can be placed quickly. Unfortunately, this talent will only come with continued practice, so don't get discouraged.

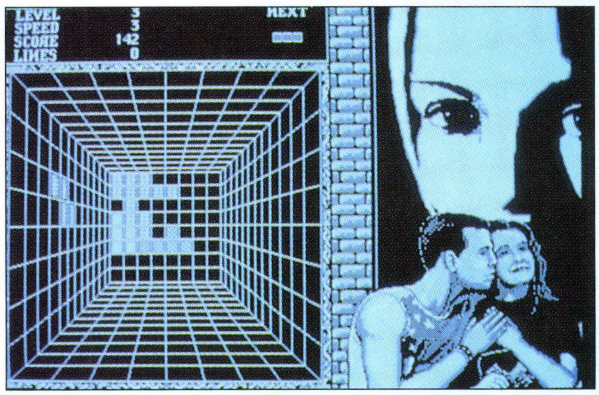
Once a game begins, drop pieces in such a way that parts of them form a complete line either horizontally across the center of the well or vertically down the middle. The idea here is to form lines down the center so that if a piece appears that the player cannot place efficiently, there will be plenty of room to dump it without blocking a wall off. This strategy becomes more crucial as game play continues. When losing these pieces, remember to dump each flush against another piece so there are no "holes" in the structure.

It is also a good idea for beginners to activate the "next piece" option. This is very important in game play since it allows players to see

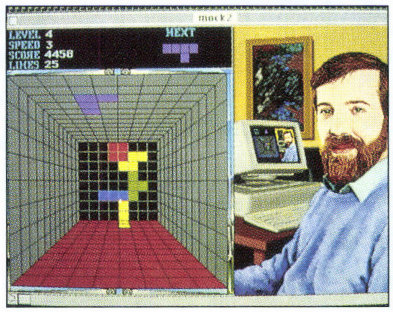


what the next piece will be and, therefore, think one move ahead. Use this by placing the falling piece in such a way that the next piece will fit perfectly alongside it.

This strategy is also useful to gain a newcomer some bonus points. Players are awarded more points by eliminating more than one row at a time from the base. Use this "thinking ahead" strategy to drop pieces so that the appearance of a certain piece will finish off two or three rows at once. Another way to earn bonus points early on is to position and drop pieces as quickly as possible. The longer a piece falls down the well, the more the player earns for positioning it. This only works on the first few levels, however, since by Level 4 things are moving much too fast to worry about bonus points.



The main thing to avoid in *Welltris*, which was also true of *Tetris*, is introducing holes into the base construction that cannot be filled because they are enclosed on all four sides by pieces. Only drop a piece if it will fit perfectly next to the other sections. If this seems impossible, drop the piece off to the side, and make sure it's flush against the construction so no holes will form. Despite all these warnings, this will eventually happen to even the best of us. When it does, concentrate all efforts on removing rows that are next to the hole, so it will open up to be filled by a subsequent piece.



As with *Tetris*, try to learn the pieces that make up *Welltris*, and you'll find your score increasing.

The last trick up the old sleeve in *Welltris* is the use of corners. This strategy is tricky to master, but it's worth it, since it can save a seemingly lost game. Use the corners only when you're desperate, since tracking a piece that splits off a corner is difficult and can lead to an even tougher situation. Use this routine when the floor is pretty full and the piece falling simply won't fit anywhere without blocking a wall off. If this is the case, position the falling piece so that half of it is on one wall and half is on the other. When the piece hits the floor, it will split into two smaller segments and travel in the direction of the wall it was on when it split. Keep in mind that these pieces will only travel until one of them hits a blockage, at which time they'll both stop. Make sure these smaller segments will finish a row or at least fall safely. Otherwise, a player may inadvertently block off two walls for the price of one!

—F.T., Jr.

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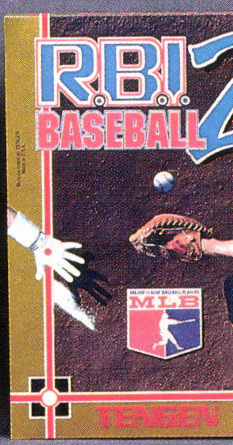
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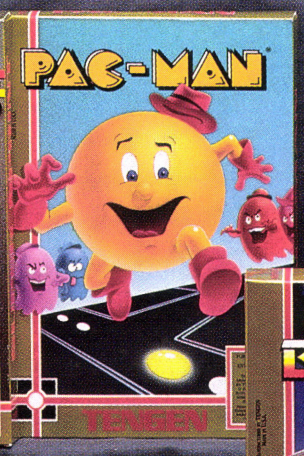
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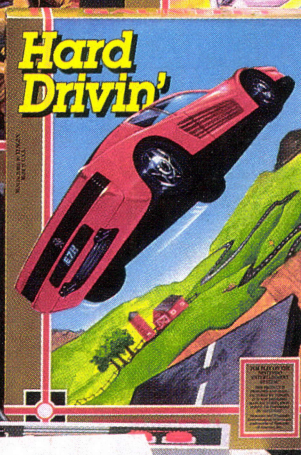


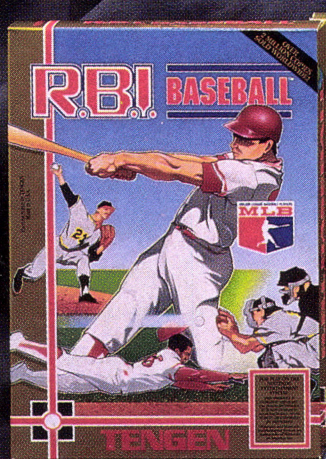


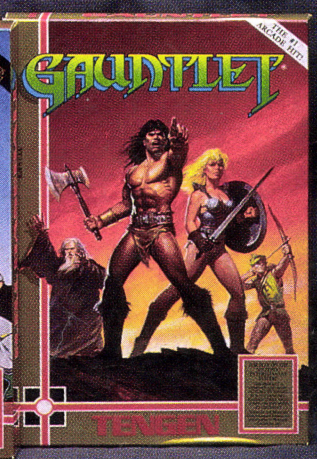








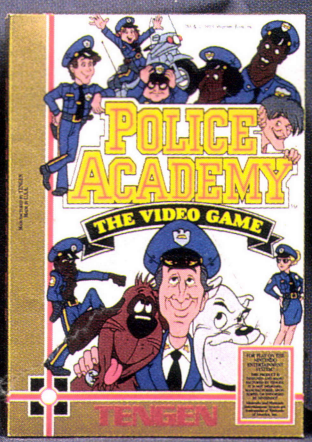






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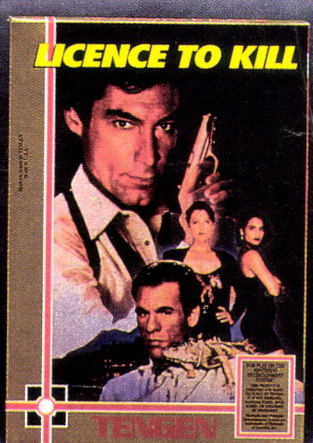
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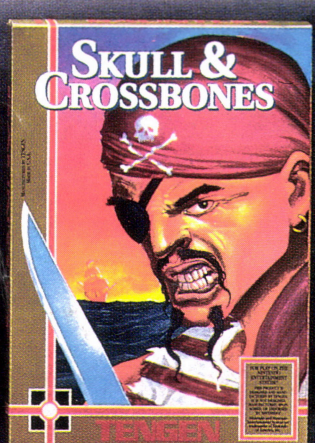
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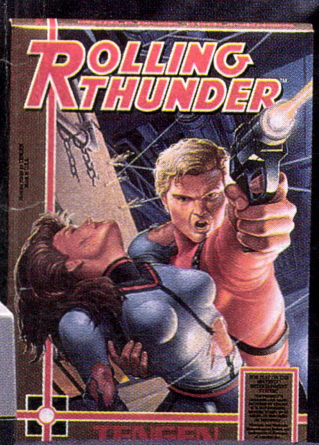


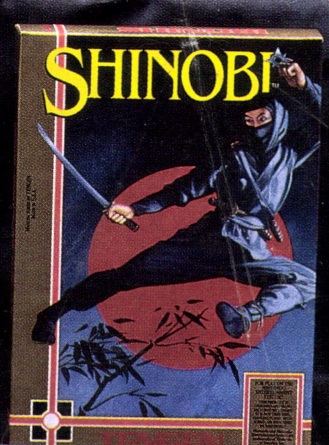




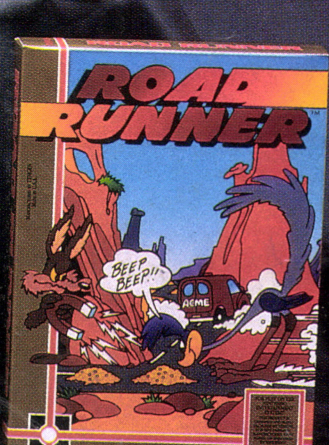
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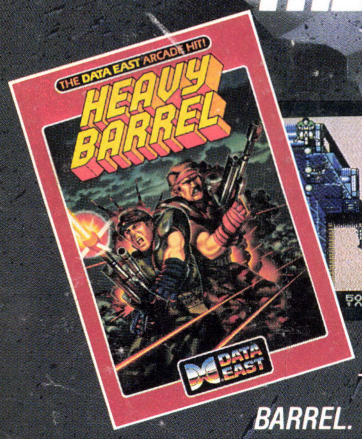
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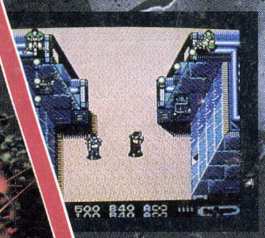
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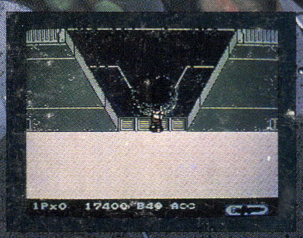
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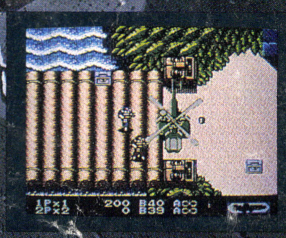
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